

Initiations of Domestication:

A Mythological Exploration of Curriculum in Self, School, and Society

BY

D. JOE OHLINGER

B.A., Grinnell College, 1997

M.Ed., University of Illinois at Chicago, 2003

DISSERTATION

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Defense Committee:

William H. Schubert, Chair and Advisor

David Stovall, Policy Studies

William Ayers

Ming Fang He, Georgia Southern University

Peter Hilton, St. Xavier University

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife, Isabel Nuñez, and my daughter, Maeve Nuñez Ohlinger.

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SUMMARY

This is a fictionalized autobiographical dissertation that conceptually explores the intersection of myth and curriculum through the lenses of my lived experiences. It is a qualitative inquiry structured around the 17 stages of the hero's journey as described by Joseph Campbell (1949) in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell's study of comparative mythology inspired his view that there is an overall pattern in myths around the world that fulfills, in part, a pedagogic function. This pattern, which he calls the *monomyth*, is organized into three sections. The first section, which Campbell labels *departure*, contains five stages that a hero character typically navigates in preparation for more difficult psychological inner work. The second section, named *initiation*, contains six stages and deals with how the character, through a period of trials, transcends his or her epistemological boundaries. The final section, *return*, discusses through six stages how the hero returns and integrates into society bearing the gift of his or her newfound knowledge. The chapters in this dissertation match Campbell's stages conceptually. Methodologically, the dissertation is eclectic, utilizing narrative inquiry, auto-ethnography, and phenomenology to interpret the curriculum of my own life experiences as a student of public education, an educator, member of society, and a human being according to the stages of Campbell's hero's journey. The inquiry examines how ancient myths and contemporary narrative structures intersect with my own meanings and interrogates the impact of my own socialization. The purpose of the dissertation is to consider the potential for a spiritualized, subjective curriculum focusing on the development of self and to critique current market-based education 'reforms.' This is offered as a substantive and methodological contribution to the field of curriculum studies, in part because Campbell's hero journey has not been fully explored as a pedagogical and curricular resource.

Chapter I: Prologue

Labyrinths and Mazes

The following chapters explore, conceptually, the intersection of myth and curriculum, through the lenses of my lived experiences. This qualitative inquiry is structured around the seventeen stages of initiation from Joseph Campbell's (1949), *Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Campbell's deep interest and study of comparative mythology inspired his view that there are certain patterns in myths around the world that fulfill, in part, a pedagogic function, which he calls the monomyth. There are three sections to Campbell's outline of the hero's journey, each with five or six distinct stages within, as seen below. The chapters in this dissertation match Campbell's stages conceptually, and are consistent except that in the "Return" section, several chapters are condensed. Also, I have added this prologue and an epilogue.

Campbell's Outline

Chapter I: Departure

1. The Call to Adventure
2. Refusal of the Call
3. Supernatural Aid
4. The Crossing of the First Threshold
5. The Belly of the Whale

Chapter II: Initiation

1. The Road of Trials
2. The Meeting with the Goddess
3. Woman as the Temptress
4. Atonement with the Father

5. Apotheosis
6. The Ultimate Boon

Chapter III: Return

1. Refusal of the Return
2. The Magic Flight
3. Rescue from Without
4. The Crossing of the Return Threshold
5. Master of the Two Worlds
6. Freedom to Live

As an aspiring curriculum studies practitioner I was graciously given the opportunity to ponder, wonder, and theorize a response to the “what’s worthwhile” question (e.g., Connelly, He, Phillion, 2008; He, Schultz, & Schubert, 2015; Jackson, 1992; Kridel, 2010; Marshall, Sears, & Schubert, 2000; Pinar, 2004; Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995; Schubert, 1986; Schubert, 2009a; Schubert, 2010b; Schubert & Lopez, 1980; Schubert, Lopez Schubert, Thomas, & Carroll, 2002; Slattery, 1995; Smith, Stanley, & Shores, 1950; Spencer, 1861; Tillett, 2011; Tyler, 1949; Watkins, 2012; Whitehead, 1929; Woodson, 1933). This study is my rejoinder to that central question of curriculum studies. I propose that looking at myth as curriculum, which pedagogues have done for centuries, is worthwhile. Campbell (1951) summarizes:

Rites, then, together with the mythologies that support them, constitute the second womb, the matrix of the postnatal gestation of the placental Homo sapiens. This fact, moreover, has been known to the pedagogues of the [human] race, certainly since the period of the Upanishads. (p. 55)

Mythology offers a curriculum of initiation into self-knowledge that is potentially critical, empowering, and transformative. This is not a clinical study, but rather, a conceptual and theoretical exploration that may point the way to further study.

This inquiry started before I entered college. I was drawn first to the iconography of the Catholic Church, and then to the realm of imagination and fantasy in the speculative fiction genre. The narratives, images, and metaphors in these modern myths captured my attention, perhaps because science fiction has a penchant for making “the familiar strange.” I kept reading and watching these dystopian scenes, worlds, futures, and possibilities in an attempt to overlay them on top of my lived experiences. We have spiritual needs, and we encounter what the world has to offer. Schubert (2010) captures this idea:

Although print materials (books, magazines, and hybrids such as comics) are diminished by comparison to the myriad images to which we are exposed on a momentary basis; they still have deep impact. Why do so many scientists talk of benefit in formative years from comic books which were considered taboo by their schools? Why do the young rise to the occasion to comprehend Harry Potter, the Lord of the Rings, Spiderman, and much more of modern and postmodern mythology, while in school the same students are earmarked as problematic learners? (p. 627)

Schubert’s question points to the other main part of this inquiry—a critique of school and society. Schools do not cultivate the interior world, and the presence of fiction literature itself is being diminished under the new Common Core standards. Ironically, the “culture-makers” use mythological tools to create initiations of dependency and subservience. The images of the labyrinth and maze might orient the reader to this critique. During my brief association with the

Theosophical Society in Wheaton, Illinois, my skills as a landscape designer were requested in the design and construction of a labyrinth there for the purposes of meditation. The labyrinth's form is a single, winding route that descends toward the center, symbolizing a path towards greater knowledge and wisdom, which is the pedagogic function of myth. In a labyrinth, the traveler is meant to return to the world, along the same path, in order to share his or her insights with others. The function of a maze is to confuse and imprison.

Chapter II: The Call to Adventure

This Curriculum Has Been Waiting

Leviathans at the Door

I was riding my bike away from the Pacific Ocean as I peddled towards my daughter's elementary school. Only yesterday I had given her bicycle seat a shove and watched her glide away, riding and balancing for the first time. We were on the Great Highway, next to San Francisco's Ocean Beach, and heard, faintly, perennially, the muffled exhale of the surf. It reminded me of the first time she walked from the coffee table in our living room, taking three short steps to reach me. Her grin then was enormous, as it was now, and so was mine. I balanced her bike across the handlebars of my own as I rode up the incremental slopes of our Outer Sunset neighborhood. It was unlikely she could manage the steep blocks leading up to Francis Scott Key School, but a controlled descent was possible. I intended to keep her bike locked up for when I returned later in the day and we could descend together. Her first steps as a toddler mingled with the exhilarating sense of freedom I felt with her as I let go of the seat---both were solid, grounding, and palpable moments marking her growth. At present, I was heading for a small ceremony particular to our school---today marking the 200th anniversary of the national anthem, and Maeve's school bearing the author's name. I said that I would be there when I dropped her off only an hour earlier, and had this intuitive sense that showing up, so she could see me, was somehow essential to her sense of stability in the world. I stood within the large playground behind the school, where students and parents meet in the morning and gather for such assemblies, and sure enough, I watched as Ms. Lu emerged with her entourage of small human souls, aged 5, ambling out behind her and finding their spot on the pretty blue-painted concrete. Maeve looked around after she sat down, looking for me, and smiled, reservedly, when our eyes

met. My father ledger clicked, or rang, at that moment and I knew, despite my faults, that I had done something right.

The “ceremony” began with the principal reading from a script about the importance of the day, the anthem, the author, and our country, but she lost me when I saw her reading from a piece of paper, and the words became disembodied. My eyes snapped into a different focus, noticing the outline of the building, its colors, and gradations of the swelling slopes of San Francisco. My gaze returned. The parents were all standing around in a loose, multi-layered ring around our children as a group of official adults and students led the ritual. The principal, a former student, several teachers, and select students who read from a script began recanting a rendition of Key’s experience aboard the British ship which prompted him to write the poem in the first place, of which a verse is our national anthem. The night before I had googled the logistics of this event and briefly visited a link to Wikipedia about Key. I left the page after a 20-second skim with the knowledge that he was a vehement anti-abolitionist and prominent slave holder. When the third student parroted the line “Key was a respected attorney,” I disconnected from the entire experience and noticed, for the first time, the row of pigeons that had assembled on the roof-edge of the building, in reaction, supposedly, to this congregation of humans. I wondered if they alighted to watch and wait for food. How many greasy small hands inadvertently bestow a daily feast? One seagull accompanied them, sitting apart, as if according to some hierarchical impetus. Or perhaps, I imagined, they were the emissaries of this habitat, bearing witness to our ritual as representatives of the natural world. It was then that I remembered how close the imminent ocean was—just three or four blocks away, down what must be an ancient slope where the foam shushes continually. Every once in a while I start, with considerable effort, to ponder what it means to be on the edge of a continent, yards away from

the largest ocean on Earth, with voracious riptides and great white sharks just off shore. I read about these facts on the internet the day before, saw a video explaining the phenomenon of riptides and imagined I could identify them the next time we waded into the chilly, salty Pacific. Several locals had already warned us to never turn our back on the ocean. What does it mean to be on the boundary of so much energy, so much life, so much power? Suddenly, I wondered if anyone noticed that I was looking up at the roofline and sniffing the air, while students, near the school's foundation were speaking. I saw forced smiles on onlookers and felt the urge to make a listening face. Here we all were, looking up to the rising flag, pledging allegiance, hands over our hearts, and eating, consuming the sanctification of well-respected professionals. We strained our bodies and faces to go through the motions, making sure that we were doing the right things, until the "ceremony" was over and the kids could go back into their particular conditioning environments, and the rest of the adults could resume their duties as hard workers, as compliant, responsible citizens. A part of me would be all of those things, if I could be, but I have too fuzzy boundaries to maintain that level of competence. I have a deficiency, my mind wanders for a lack of discipline. I think strange things like how my empathy, or imagined empathy, for the birds moved me more than anything else, except Maeve's knowledge that her father was there, as promised, to see her. Somehow, the knowledge of the pigeons and the seagull, and the father-daughter bond seemed more important, more potent, than the schooling activities. The ocean that was not part of our daily routine and from which we were distracted, was so ever-present and omniscient. Something about the sound of the waves tugged at my imagination. A part of me wonders what curriculum the ocean is. Even as I second-guessed my own, intuitive longings and sensibility, I made sure to hug and kiss Maeve, and say "I love you." I wonder if the leviathans surging in Maeve's, and all the kindergarteners', still unbridled inner worlds pay attention to the

official ceremonial curriculum we adults prepared for them on this day, or if they turn their penetrating gaze deeper, looking for something rhythmic, something substantial, within their own depths.

Stage One

But whether small or great, and no matter what the stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration—a rite, or moment of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth. The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand.

(Campbell, 1949, p. 51)

In chapter one of *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell (1949) describes the first step in the hero's journey as "the call to adventure." The idea here is that our business-as-usual lives and ways of seeing things get disrupted and we are irresistibly drawn into deeper levels of awareness. The call comes, perhaps more often than not, when we stumble, fall and even break down. I am reminded of the story about Carl Jung where a patient comes to him in a morose state having just lost his job and gotten divorced. Jung replies, "Great! Now we can do some real work." Campbell says that in myths the call comes from a herald or messenger. This is usually some ugly, loathsome creature such as the princess's frog, the little goblin, or the lame horse. All of these seemingly trivial creatures are really powerful magical forces in disguise. It's as if we need to be tricked in order to take the leap and grow. As students we often need to be coaxed, lured, and persuaded to expand our horizons.

In "A Philosopher Looks at Qualitative Research," Greene (1997) expects the researcher to instigate a similar shift from the "taken-for-granted" worldview into a "mode of awakening"

where the world is looked at with a conscious, reflective attitude: “It is when the doubt is consciously experienced, when there is a moment of wonder, that the worthwhile questions begin being posed” (p. 16). Researchers need to cross a deeper threshold in order to observe, reflect and analyze. Grumet (1999/1980) describes how reconceptualizations of lived curriculum can occur by creating stories about our lives and then mapping the meaning we make of them. She says that a student can then become “an active agent in his own interests” (p. 28). The autobiographical writing process in this dissertation may well be a kind of transfiguration of the past, a self-instigated calling.

Whether dream or myth, in these adventures there is an atmosphere of irresistible fascination about the figure that appears suddenly as a guide, marking a new period, a new stage, in the biography. (Campbell, 1949, p. 55)

Campbell invokes the story of the Buddha—noting how he started his life in a place of privilege. He is the son of a king who is determined to keep the young boy away from the realities of the world. The boy goes out into the world surrounded by the king’s servants who create a virtual reality around him of perfection and bliss—strikingly similar, perhaps, to the designers of Disneyland. The unconscious archetypes as messengers devise a plan to upset—like the critical theorist—and disrupt the signifiers surrounding the early Buddha by sending an old man, ugly and decrepit, into the scene. The Buddha looks upon the old age, the poverty, the ugliness and now knows that there are deeper truths in the world. Breaking out of the artificial, ideological views of the world and himself, he begins his spiritual journey. The old beggar shows up in Stephen R. Donaldson’s (1977) *The Chronicles of Thomas Covenant*, a psychological fantasy series included on National Public Radio’s (NPR’s) list of top 100 science fiction novels. The main character begins his “descent” after contracting leprosy and becoming separated from

his son and wife. The entire village sees him as an outcast. The descent is heralded by the appearance of an abhorrent beggar—a prophet-like figure who propels him into a different world. I recall how my privileged worldview was continually fractured during my coursework at University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC). In class Bill Watkins once described how carefully images of the consummate “white man” have been constructed: He is hard working, simple, loyal, good-natured and goofy; he likes to drink beer and have a good time. Erich Fromm (1956) suggests that we construct such images from a collection of qualities that we see and understand ourselves by, in order to “sell” our personality to others. Fromm was critiquing popular notions of romantic love—exposing the consumer nature of how we package ourselves. Watkins was suggesting that a similar kind of ideological engineering made the working and middle-class white man unassailable—he is too endearing and adorable to be at fault.

Outside Curriculum

As I have been preternaturally drawn to adventure stories I recall a constant wondering anxiety about when my “journey” or adventure would begin. I imagined, first, that I was unworthy—that I would not be called. Then I thought that it would only happen when I was “ready.” Finally, I looked for portents or tried to create auspicious beginnings—such as starting the Ph.D. program, or learning to play the guitar. Often I imagined too literally, as if by walking out my door that somehow my job as a teacher could become like the adventures I read. Michael Meade sees the world through initiation and maintains that we are already and always in the midst of some initiation whether we know it or not, and regardless of our age. This is meaningful because it casts our lives in a pedagogical frame, where we can embody the notion of being a “lifelong learner.” It would seem that the call to transformation, like learning, is inevitable. Perhaps the writing of this dissertation represents the “calling” phase of an initiation, or perhaps

the “ordeal” phase. Looking back there have been many “callings” throughout my education. Some were for the love of a mentor or love of subject. Now I look back and “mark” and “map” other pathways. It turns out that my first experience going away to college was heralded not by a shiny mascot, but by some other, more odious messenger. I was being called, but I didn’t know it then.

I recall sitting in a bar, “The Keg,” near the University of Illinois, with my friend Brian Thompson. We were drunk, in one of Fromm’s (1956) drunken “orgiastic states” attempting to anneal our anxiety of separation by listening to “Free Bird,” to “American Pie,” and to “Fat-bottomed Girls.” We were one massive crowd, reenacting this ritual each Saturday night. Brassieres were stapled to the ceiling and one could only hope that the young woman next to you would add to the bosomy décor. Nights of drinking Wednesday through Friday were preparation for this climax. We were all mashed together, connected to each other, swaying, singing, totally lost. The beer and the roaming nights with the smell of cow shit perpetually in the air at this agricultural university, all mingled together. I was bright. I was the artist. I was successful at my lessons, but the big stories about sex and drinking were my “outside curriculum,” part of the ecological demense that made my university studies tangential (Schubert, 2010a, p. 628). I did not care about the Catholic stuff anymore. The initiation of drinking and wishing with every cell in my body that I could sleep with a woman were the only focus of my entire existence that second-year foray into college. Perhaps only by becoming “wasted” could I then let go of my conditioning. It’s funny, only as I am writing this can I see it for something other than a falling, a failure, a waste of all that money, a reflection on my parents, a disgrace, another nail in the quitter story. No, it was the parts of myself that did not think, that were not dominated by a narrative of oppression. *Falstaff nights* became a phrase by which I legitimated my depraved

activities. An English teacher in high school taught me to love Shakespeare, and in doing so I learned about the character Falstaff who shows up in several plays as the ultimate playboy and rabble rouser. So, college was liberating after all. It was all about two liberal ideas—sex and drugs.

My calling at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) was enshrined as a massive failure that destroyed, perhaps, all of my mother's vision for her son. My money was wasted, I had failed and quit in the middle of a program of study—the last program before I would launch into a career. If the 12 prior years were all preparation for this next phase, I had made the biggest mistake of my life. I wonder if I was fulfilling my Appalachian destiny of ineptitude. I was becoming a “briar-hopper,” the demeaning term applied to the hill people from Kentucky who came to southern Ohio, instead of the upstanding “Kentuckian.” Weeks later, at the behest of my parents I went through three therapists, then a friend recommended a highly controversial one, Red Bear. This social worker was not what I expected. He had a large red beard, smoked cigars and was overall strange. Yet in the first 10 minutes a massive part of me felt great relief in knowing that this was the person I needed to tell secret things to. I can still remember the “rightness” to it. Perhaps I hadn't failed the call after all. The first thing he said one or two weeks later was, “Congratulations, there's nothing clinically wrong with you ... you are just undeveloped.” Then he said the thing that has haunted me ever since, he said, “You have the emotional level of a 3-year-old in the body of a 20-year-old attempting to navigate college and adult life.” Often I ask myself whether the only thing that has changed has been my physical age. Rumi wrote a lot of poems with images of being drunk. The wine, the spirits, the orgiastic state was symbolic of falling in love with the divine. Perhaps in school, when we get to the level, typically, when students have some self-direction and choice the immediate, urgent, and

irresistible call is to drown themselves in spirits—literally bathe themselves with cheap pilsner beer, and to go in search of love, to make up for all the repressive curricula of the previous 12 years.

Mazes

As I look back I wonder about my “calls.” More often than not I can only think of moments of crisis, such as they were to me. The aggregate story, as a reflection of my central autobiographical theme—that I am the undeveloped boy, the uninitiated, suggests a constant calling. If so my life has been a grand series of hesitations and failures, the pattern left by learned helplessness. John Dewey (1909) notes how kids learn to be inferior. Is it possible that many of us are taught to miss the call? Survival, then, becomes the pinnacle achievement. My therapist once chastised me for having such diminished aspirations. He was right, the best I could ever hope for was some kind of desperate and barely legitimate redemption of inadequacies. In consumerist and capitalist ideologies there is a similar diminishment of possibilities. Hinchey (2008) suggests that students are taught to accept and normalize, perhaps even be grateful for, a diminished social status. She describes students being trained for the workforce, “who have been prepared to accept the most menial work for the lowest wages” (p. 105).

Our inability to see ourselves and our lives as romantic, daring, and filled with ritual and import is not a mistake. Schools are virtual realities for the ruling class. They are the places and conditions of powerful learning such as the one depicted in the movie *The Matrix* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999) where humans dream their lives plugged into a constructed reality while machines suck their life force away. How are our calls answered? Within particular spaces, as Illich (1970) suggests, in an “age-specific, teacher related process requiring full-time attendance at an obligatory curriculum” (p. 25). If only schooling were so dull and simple. Our schools are

more insidious—they are designed as mazes for the psychological self. In many ways, this dissertation is a record of my own futile wandering.

Chapter III: Refusal of the Call

Timorous Soul of the Domesticated Libido

White Fog

‘Little cat feet’ seem too fuzzy and cute, and the fog feels harmless enough; after a while, you hardly notice it. Seen from a distance it looks stolid, impermeable, yet you can walk through it and there’s nothing to hold or touch once you’re in it. There must be 50 words for fog, in some language or culture, and you’d think that Ocean Beach and the Outer Sunset would have them. Perhaps to match my own sense of vagueness in this world, to make stark the relief between my roles as a father/worker/teacher/white man/middle-class person/human being and some other reality, I walk on cat feet, terrified, next to the night, the imponderable pounding of surf, the cold splay of Orion’s constellation overhead, the edge of the ‘forest’ that is Golden Gate Park, and the cold vaporous swirl of the fog. There are two massive, hard realities that I confront on these walks. One is visible in the houses, streets, lights, and cars. All sleeping now, but the hive will soon be waking for the work day. I stand on the outer edge of the peninsula of San Francisco. My wife and I describe the city as an entitled manic urban place, filled with middle-class white people, such as ourselves. In this reality, Michael Meade (personal communication, August, 2014) says, we negotiate the outer journey by making our way through society. We need to pay the rent. Millions of people organize their lives around this work routine. Like busy bees, they function. The other reality, the inner landscape, is occupied by this ocean edge, fog, and coterie of black ravens and white seagulls. It looks down the shoreline and imagines this place hundreds of years ago and considers the billions of years that shaped this ecosystem. This space, next to the boiling, lapping ocean with its subsonic susurrations, could be curriculum for a lifetime.

Standing on a threshold is rough enough, but add the obfuscating white permeation of the fog and we are truly in-between worlds. The fog complicates everything, and in a departure from typical associations of white and black, good and evil, I've come to see the white with dire import. In Saramago's (1995) novel *Blindness*, 'white' is finally demonized. Unseeing is caused by stark, blinding whiteness, not the dark. The characters go blind, and then, with other senses, other ways of knowing, they clumsily navigate an upended society, a hive that has become, without the ego self, an absurd, rapidly decaying, and lethal parody of itself. The value of true community becomes apparent as groups of good, suburban, middle-class Samaritans form gangs. The sanctifying veil of normalness is stripped away and the savage inequalities are laid bare in the hospital prison wing for the quarantined. The underlying sexual predation is revealed. It's as if inner worlds becomes outer reality, and our demons, which we have learned not to see, become the ubiquitously normal.

Meade's other journey lies within, and he sees many mainstream men lost in another kind of mist that echoes the dire import from Saramago's novel. He describes the particular cultural conditioning of men who come from mostly white, middle-class backgrounds as a *white fog* (M. Meade, personal communication, August 19, 2014). On retreats I see other men, like me, who share dismay, disorientation, apathy, depression and paralysis. They—we—express inarticulate shrieks of futile resistance. Our angst seems desperate, like so much tantrum hurled at unseen oppressors. Meade says that the leaders of the retreat know how to deal with red fog issues, but not white fog issues. They can deal with anger, violence, force, rage, etc., but they don't know what to do with the more insidious disintegration of self and soul from the suburban, white men. The angry young men from the gangs tell stories of oppression, violence, fear, and pain. They want peace and justice. They are in a real, physical battle. We are numb, cotton-filled suburban

sons of privilege. We have what Meade calls a domesticated libido (M. Meade, personal communication, August 19, 2014). There is no fight. We are impotent. We can't see the enemy. We have a feeling that things are not right, but mostly we are sleepy, numb--losing the feelings and passion of our lives. One particular myth brought the implications of the idea of the white fog to bear for me.

I was sitting in the lodge in Mendocino, California at one of Meade's men's retreats, listening to other men weigh in on how the story, the myth, spoke to them. It was late in the night, perhaps 11:00 p.m.; there was a fire at one end and things were getting tense. Speaking is not a privilege. One older man was vigorously challenged after insisting that he had a "right" to talk as much as he wanted, and that nobody should cut him short. No one was trying to silence him, they were just trying to get him to speak from his heart, or gut, and not out of his head. Nobody speaks for long if they are *in ego*, meaning that they are sharing without conviction or emotion. Other men tell them to get to the point, to shut up, to sit down, etc. I don't know what internal, intuitive rubrics we have to measure the integrity in a man's story, but there are standards in the room at Mendocino. The story was perhaps halfway through, but this was the night where anyone who hadn't spoken was being invited to—so I had to speak. The only problem was that my place in the story, the place where I saw myself was much earlier, near the beginning, and we were already far past it. The story: a Russian folk tale called "The Firebird and Princess Vasilisa" (Meade, 1993). The scene I got stuck on went like this ... One day a prince was riding through the forest when a great thunderbird flew overhead, and while it passed a feather came loose and fell to the ground. The boy went over to the feather and was about to pick it up when his horse spoke, warning him that if he picked up that feather, then amazing wonders he would know, but also, terrible peril. Of course, the young man picks up the feather

and that begins his amazing set of adventures. Many men on the retreat talked about picking up the feather as it represents powerful stages of life for them such as getting married, taking on a first job, joining a gang, etc. When I saw myself in the story, I realized that I did not pick up the feather.

Second Stage

In Campbell's second stage some would-be heroes refuse the call. To refuse a divine summons usually means that one would be tormented by harpies, suffer quiet desperation, or fall into an enchanted sleep—in any case the adventurer is put into stasis. Internally, the refusal suggests that the hero does not want to develop, to mature, to go deeper, to expand his or her horizons: "The future is regarded not in terms of an unremitting series of deaths and births, but as though one's present system of ideals, virtues, goals, and advantages were to be fixed and made secure" (Campbell, 1949, p. 60). Campbell refers to the worldview of a younger person, yet how many of us get to a comfortable place, a functioning place? Campbell continues:

The literature of psychoanalysis abounds in examples of such desperate fixations. What they represent is an impotence to put off the infantile ego, with its sphere of emotional relationships and ideals. One is bound in by the walls of childhood; the father and mother stand as guardians, and the timorous soul, fearful of some punishment, fails to make the passage through the door and come to birth in the world without. (p. 62)

So here again myth offers some insight into a dynamic that is perhaps very commonplace within our family structures and relationships. This stage certainly rings true for me.

Domesticated Libido

Going back to that place in the story, I saw myself getting down off the horse, bending to pick up the feather when my parents showed up, a couple neighbors, the priests, the teachers—all

of them saying “Don’t!” Like Ken Kesey’s (1962) Nurse Ratched in the novel *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, they all wanted me to be a “good boy.” They wanted me to be civilized and nice, and to make the “right” decisions, and, like her, they were going to be damned if I didn’t. No sex, no wildness, no messiness, or danger—no cars, no trips, no stereos, no getting off the path to Little Red Riding Hood’s grandmother’s house. This encasement of the adventurous spirit of the white suburban boy I thought of as my trial and tribulation, and I saw it as stupid—laughable in its paltriness, next to the tough gang bangers who revealed their deadly lifeworlds at the retreats. And in truth, in terms of growing up in a hostile environment, those young men from the inner city do have “real” problems to worry about. Yet, I wonder if the psychological damning of the white fog isn’t as destructive in its own way. I stood there before the feather as an impotent manikin—afraid of my own fear. Campbell (1998) refers to the libido as “the impulse to life” and writes that it “comes from the heart” (p. 234). Putting aside the sexual connotations of libido for a moment, it becomes a rather profound way to think of our own capacity for agency. However, I was taught at an early age that I would be punished by the supreme being of the universe with an eternity of damnation if I picked up that feather—and I took that narrative in. Sex, masturbation, and sexual thoughts were “sins” and the sex act itself was a *mortal sin*. This was an initiation into a kind of destructive self-contradiction on a level that involves the body as well as the mind. This moral imperative is not relegated to the demesne of Catholicism. Takaki (1979) suggests that our founding fathers envisioned convenient “iron cages” within each citizen’s psyche to control the passions of the masses. Vice was seen as different forms of “luxury” which Thomas Paine described generally as “dull animal enjoyment” (Takaki, 1979, p. 5) and included multiple forms of entertainment such as games, festivals, dancing, drinking, gambling, etc. The success of the nation depended upon citizen ability to self-regulate the

“instinctual” parts of the self. Takaki characterizes this as an effort to separate the mind from the body, as the body represents connections to wildness, passion, luxury, libido, etc. This effort to repress “passions” represents the “republican iron cage” (p. 10). It was difficult to convey to a group of 20 gang members that I, too, felt a sense of injustice. Still, I want to go back to my 16-year-old self and tell him to hang around those friends who took risks more, to buy the muscle car, to chase the girls, to be a wild teenager. I want to tell him to pick up that feather, not so much to pursue hedonistic pleasure, but to not be so afraid, hesitant, passive, and easily enclosed in foggy pastures already prepared for him. Slattery (1995) insists, “All educational institutions must address the despair, the malaise, and the fear that has overtaken the human community as the result of the oppressive and destructive modern structures” (p. 91). This could apply for red and white fog initiates.

Glass Cages

There are many reasons why we don't answer the call. Perhaps for most it is an unconscious fear, or proclivity to stay where it is safe and comfortable. In our culture perhaps it is also because we are distracted, we are too busy being productive to attend to the calls, or, perhaps there is a darker explanation why some of us refuse the call, and don't pick up that feather--engineered oblivion. The idea of Fromm's (1956) “herd conformity” seems harmless enough, but the implications for domesticating the life impulses and imaginations of young people are dire. What glass cages have been prepared for us? Bly (1996) talks about the Hindu notion of “chakras,” centers of spiritual energy within the body. He suggests that our spiritual chakra opens before our sexual one, but that nothing in our culture is there to nurture the spiritual chakra, and when the sexual one opens there's no grounding, no context, no spiritual narrative—just culture filled with the contradictions of sexual repression. The kind of pornography that is

available to young men and women on the internet is staggering in its size and variety. Perhaps we are taught not to hear the calls, just like we are taught not to “see” race and injustice. Parker Palmer (1998) talks about an “academic culture that distrusts and devalues inner reality” (p. 19). The Common Core is a “kid killer,” one guy at Mendocino said, referring to the way it discourages text-to-self reflection. Ironically, text-to-self reflection is what the Mendocino retreats are all about. Indeed, when feelings about how stories relate to ourselves are demonized, this is an engineered initiation into self-oblivion. Survival, then, becomes the pinnacle achievement.

Position Self

As I look back I wonder about my calls. More often than not I can only think of moments of crisis, such as they were to me. The aggregate story of my experience, however, is a failure to pick up that feather, and this represents a central part of my autobiographical theme—that I am the undeveloped boy, the *uninitiated*. Out of 17 distinct stages that might take a lifetime to complete, I would position myself on stage two. This is where the big red dot with the caption “you are here” should be inserted into the text. That means the rest of the dissertation will be just wild conjecture instead of the fastidiously studied autoethnographic “data” that has come before. I will have to stick to a main theme about the arrested development of the uninitiated white boy.

In positioning myself as a researcher, the fact that I am writing this is a privilege, and that I am enrolled in program of higher education. The topic of this dissertation, exploring the connections between curriculum and mythopoetics, and that I am allowed to be creative by using a mostly narrative methodology ... is a privilege. I want to say this is part of the human condition, and that it is shared by many, but in the end, this is my very particular and personal account of what’s worth knowing, and it is coming from a very limited epistemological

positionality steeped in a milieu of white fog. Most of the films, novels, and theory I cite are from white authors and filmmakers who are critical dystopians. In fact, in writing this dissertation I've come to realize that throughout my entire education the required reading of non-white authors has been almost non-existent. My first awareness of race came from reading the adolescent narrative *Black Ice* (Cary, 1992), written from the perspective of a black teenager. In my doctoral program I was exposed to several black research traditions, and as a teacher's assistant I taught a course on race and ethnicity. This lack of scholarship is obviously a serious flaw. I will weave some of the writers that I have encountered into this dissertation. I do not feel qualified to discuss race, outside of my own whiteness. My experience growing up in the white fog included an oblivion towards my own identity signifiers in the world—a prison, as I hope to convey. Qualitative researchers strive to let the reader know about their own backgrounds and potential biases before attempting to get at other people's meanings. I am trying to get at my own meaning, and to call my thinking/researching mind out ... like some awkward, white-skinned, bearded, 6-foot tall Anglo researcher in the rain forest of the unconsciousness. How do the “unconscious forces” watch, cat-like, this would-be participant observer, this certified thinking avatar traipsing around the inner landscape?

Chapter IV: Supernatural Aid

Use the Force

There are two kinds of intelligence: one acquired, as a child in school memorizes facts and concepts from books and from what the teacher says, collecting information from the traditional sciences as well as from the new sciences.

With such intelligence you rise in the world. You get ranked ahead or behind others in regard to your competence in retaining information. You stroll with this intelligence in and out of fields of knowledge, getting always more marks on your preserving tablets.

There is another kind of tablet, one already completed and preserved inside you. A spring overflowing its springbox. A freshness in the center of the chest. This other intelligence does not turn yellow or stagnate. It's fluid, and it doesn't move from outside to inside through conduits of plumbing-learning.

This second knowing is a fountainhead from within you, moving out. (Rumi, 13th Century)

We Are Carried

In the third stage of Campbell's (1949) structure the hero receives "supernatural aid." Commonly this is portrayed in a scene where an elder figure, living just outside the community, provides advice and talismans for the journey ahead. Campbell explains that these figures symbolize "the benign, protecting power of destiny," and that "protective power is always and ever present within the sanctuary of the heart and even immanent within, or just behind, the unfamiliar features of the world. One has to only know and trust, and the ageless guardians will appear" (p. 72). This assurance of aid is comforting, and it implies, at face value, the need for a trust and faith in something bigger than, and outside of, ourselves—the gods, a higher power, or an intelligent designer, perhaps. Campbell draws upon African, Middle Eastern, and Western examples of guardian figures. What comes to mind in my experience is the ghost of Obi-Wan Kenobi of George Lucas' (1977) *Star Wars* films, or Frodo's receiving of the *light of Earendil*, a magical phial, from Galadriel in Tolkein's (1956) *The Return of the King* before encountering Shelob, the great spider. My daughter's favorite television show, "My Little Pony," is full of special gemstones, wands, spells, and guardians. Guides and tokens of power are prodigiously present in fantasy and speculative fiction, both literature and film, yet it seems that once we start talking about such sources of power, we quickly enter into the realm of childish fiction. The fantasy genre and comic book milieu appear to be the haunts of adults who never really left childhood, or perhaps the draw for the arcane behind the superhero mask has deeper implications. Either way, these kinds of interests do not have much currency in schools.

Sunday Mornings

"How do I write lessons plans for this?"—was my first reaction to thinking about supernatural aid and schooling. As I mentioned in chapter three, considering the curricular

implications of “supernatural aid” seems ridiculous because there is very little mainstream discourse around this phenomenon. The word “supernatural” appears in the same orbit as the metaphysical, spiritual, magical, mystical, paranormal, preternatural, and occult. The lack of clarity is ironic according to Slattery (1995), as in the past wars and the fate of civilizations were fought over the exact meaning of terms such as religion, theology, and spirituality (p. 75). In addition to being lumped together, these systems of belief have been delegitimized:

In the quest for information and knowledge, the wisdom of the sages of human history has too often been scorned and silenced. Information technology has replaced the encounter with the metaphysical ... like a disrespectful child or impudent criminal placed in solitary confinement, the theological text has been banished from theoretical discourse and from schools. (p. 75)

The phenomenon of the supernatural would probably get framed within the perennial and obfuscating debate around religion and schooling. One position argues for the complete separation of the religious milieu from the curriculum, and the other advocates for a kind of denominational fundamentalism. Assuming we could get past the enormous contention around differing faiths, there are other reasons religion is shunned in public spaces. The citizenry may not reflect on the long history of institutionalized prejudice and oppression against marginalized groups, passive support of state-sponsored militarism, and economic hegemony, but they are now hyper-alert to news of pedophiles and those religious zealots, the jihadi terrorists. The intellectual, moral, and curricular contributions of one of the great monotheistic theological traditions of human culture, Islam, has become diminished, along with the sovereignty of any nation associated with it, as the tribal instinct demonizes the other.

The doctrine of separation of church and state, and the rise of empiricism have also diminished, compartmentalized, and basically corralled the unexplainable into spaces outside of the mainstream ontological and epistemological paradigms. I see a red thread running through my experiences in research coursework where empiricism is privileged, while autobiography and narrative inquiry seem to lose currency daily. Teachers in the face-to-face classes I teach perceive their own imaginative and theoretical speculations, reflections, and scholarship as mere “opinion.” The red thread of unexplainable phenomenon extends from the easily mocked realm of witchcraft, but winds its way into foundations courses, and the humanities in general, which are under attack because they do not add measurable value to human knowledge. When the theological is offered in curricula, it becomes a subject to be studied, and we become participant observers of our own cultural religious mores. From the classroom to the church pew, from research parameters to suburban cocktail parties—we don’t even talk about religion. There are parts of ourselves and our experiences that are swept under the bed, bundled up, put into boxes, and routinely denied. Or worse, they get “covered with layers of disappointment, cynicism, shame, or blame” (Meade, 1993, p. 191). Like the unconscious, perhaps our spiritual natures are contained within that black box. The questions of “Who am I?” and “What is the meaning of life?” need to become valid research questions. We laugh at, scorn, and hide these parts in silent humiliation. As a student of life I still want answers to these questions. I am not satisfied by what I’ve learned on Sunday morning. I am not content with my certification process. Saying the “Pledge of Allegiance,” standing up in parades to salute the flag, and wearing a graduation robe for one hour do not fill the spiritual, ritual, and moral needs that I feel. In sum, we *don’t* have a discourse for this.

Help is Close

Perhaps in our trained habit of looking for expertise outside of ourselves we make the mistake of taking the symbols in the stories literally—as dependency on aid from outside. The privileging of certified “expertise” in our culture tends to diminish our own efficacy and capabilities. Campbell (1949) suggests aid is *symbolically* derived from a character the hero encounters, but that the character and the gifts are really parts of the hero—the supernatural is really an *inner* phenomenon—not some larger, external divine expert. One gets the sense that Dewey’s constant insistence on the salience of student interests is related to Campbell’s idea. Red Bear once remarked that all characters, settings, and plots within a dream have to do with the parts of the self of the dreamer. The elders, guardians, and amulets represent powers inside of us. The supernatural aid comes from within, “protective power is always and ever present within the sanctuary of the heart ... the hero finds all the forces of the unconscious at his side” (Campbell, 1949, p. 72). If we take the story literally—that the gifts and help are outside ourselves—then we fail to read the stories metaphorically, and we don’t know how, perhaps, to read ourselves. The Eastern orientation of the individual to the supernatural within mythology is helpful here. Unlike in Western, monotheistic religions, where the individual is seen as separate from and relational to God, in many Eastern belief systems the individual is seen as a direct manifestation of the divine. Our job is to uncover, or descend into, deeper levels of awareness or consciousness while, coincidentally, our sense of “I” becomes diminished (Campbell, 1996).

Attempts to operationalize the term *inner* will follow disciplinary boundaries: the theologians and mystics say it is indeed divine intervention; the psychologists and neurologists might invoke the unconscious or the unused gray matter. Progressive theorists talk all around the inner landscape of students—we want students to become who they are, to grow, to develop their

talents and selves. All of this discourse implies some inner qualities that are related to personality and learned behavior, but have to do with something that is hard to concretize.

Thinking about the *inner* brings up all sorts of images: “self,” inner landscape, inner world, interior life, contemplative life, the subconscious, the unconscious, the psyche, the personality, etc. Postmodern curriculum theorists offer a compelling way to have a discourse around the supernatural. Eschewing dominant theological narratives, they advocate for the process of “ruminating” within a theological curriculum with a general focus on wisdom to create a “milieu where spirituality, mystery, intuition, poetry, ethics, and religious sensibilities can flourish” (Slattery, 1995, p. 98). Reflection on one’s lived experiences as a matter of *currere* turns education into “an autobiographical process, a cosmological dialogue, and a search for personal and universal harmony” (Slattery, 1995, p. 77). Far from being a polite atheism—this way of approaching the supernatural allows any belief system to interpret things, but the structure revolves around self and meaning. In speaking of initiation, Meade (1993) alludes to special inner resources as well:

During initiation someone or something other than our usual “self” takes charge. The “ego,” the usual ruler of a person, must submit to some other force or authority and let things go. All of the awareness and attention a person has will be needed to endure the ordeals. So, there is a loosening of personal identity that allows hidden, undeveloped, even denied aspects of the self to appear. (p. 164)

Captive Emotions

Rumi’s poem at the beginning of this chapter captures the potential of the *inner* succinctly, “a fountain head” with things “moving out,” and it echoes the idea that a massive host of forces inside us are at our command. Instead of inspiring dread, as a Pandora-like black box,

instead of the chaotic, scary, illimitable demonic portents that get conjured up when we say the word *unconscious*, according to theological texts, the unknown, uncertain, chartless, dark, messy, sticky, lurid, sensual, fecund, and orgiastic potential of the unconscious becomes fertile and protective, a source of trust and faith—it is helpful, a boon, a salvific respite.

While we studiously ignore the spiritual and the inner world of our students in the classroom, there seems to be a veiled religiosity imbedded within a dominant American cultural ideology. The founding fathers are invoked with a certain sense of awe. Love of country and patriotism are qualities of the devout. A fierce nationalism is apparent, conflated with capitalism and militarism; who better to describe it than a former president and general, Dwight D. Eisenhower, in the following excerpt:

This conjunction of an immense military establishment and a large arms industry is new in the American experience. The total influence—economic, political, even spiritual—is felt in every city, every State house, every office of the Federal government . . . Our toil, resources and livelihood are all involved; so is the very structure of our society. In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. (Eisenhower, 1961)

Working for a short period of time at a subsidiary of Citibank, Primerica, I found an almost spiritual tone to the meetings for us acolytes. Our coinage reassures us, “In God We Trust.” The merging of patriotism, capitalism and “Christian morals” seems welded to so many American stories and symbols. Culture-makers use the passion and mysticism of humans and story structures in patriotic ideology to seal-off argument and dissent, to harness loyalty. In the rest of our lives there is very little place for “emotion”—it is demonized—as if the power elite

wants to use “all the forces of the unconscious” for *its* ends. When the flag drifts by at the 4th of July parade, there is something more, perhaps, than simple respect; it is here where those forces manifest in one teardrop. We become sharpened tools and cry on command. Just as our hands are over our hearts at the parade, heart and hand also come together before the flag each morning during the Pledge of Allegiance. In schools, the curriculum of the spiritual is both denied, and at the same time carefully embedded within the structures of the classroom and curriculum. The sense of awe and wonder I looked for as a child in the stories of fantasy writers or in the parables I heard on Sunday mornings were mostly absent during my time at school.

Chapter V: The Crossing of the First Threshold

Epistemological Cages

God guard me from those thoughts men think

In the mind alone;

He that sings a lasting song

Thinks in a marrow-bone. (Yeats, 1935, p. 113)

Skywalker

I see the faces of iconic characters swinging as pendulums in the hands of kindergarteners; spider-man, the princesses of Equestria, Godzilla, and a face of doom—Darth Vader. These images adorn the lunch bags of young citizens as they walk to school to face another set of iconic narratives, perhaps even more dire than Darth in their Race to the Top. The heroes of Star Wars are still viable after 40 years, much like classic mythical characters. An entire generation may recall the famous line from the character Obi-Wan Kenobi, in the first triad of the *Star Wars* (1977) films: “Use the Force, Luke.” Liberally translated, this is a directive from the image of the elder just outside the village to trust one’s intuition. In the first movie of the original trilogy, the climax pivoted on these words as Luke was told to “turn off his computer” and “feel” the force as he strove to complete his epic mission of destroying the Death Star. While in a transformed epistemological zone, Luke evades all opposition and moments later we see the Death Star exploding. This scene has been parodied innumerable times, as if the essential message can only be heard in a satirical frame, perhaps because it is so true, or so desperately vital for us to heed. The argument is this: Stop relying on technology, expertise, others, and even your “thinking” mind to do what you have to do; instead, embrace the “force,” the *tao*, the third eye—your intuition, in a word.

We see these ideas in popular culture, particularly film, and it demonstrates the perennial relevance of myth and Campbell's heroes. Myth asks us to embrace other ways of knowing. Characters like Obi-wan, Yoda, Gandalf, and Dumbledore embody this idea of spiritual insight; they are the Buddhas, the Jesuses, and the Abrahams, perhaps, of current generations, reflecting the human need for icons. In the film *The Matrix* (1999) the main character, Neo, is confronted with the idea that his understanding of external reality doesn't exist in scene after scene. In one situation, he is prompted by his teacher, Morpheus, to jump off a building. In order to have faith and do so, Neo needs to "let it all go." In the film *Wall-E* (Stanton, 2008), the attachment to routine and technology which symbolizes our thinking, rationalizing minds is vividly portrayed in the fully automated, plugged-in lives of the crew of the Axiom—a refugee interstellar spaceship holding the remaining human population for centuries after leaving Earth's inhospitable polluted environment. A common theme in these films is that the main protagonist must become "selfless."

Campbell

Joseph Campbell describes the fourth step in the hero's journey as the crossing of a pivotal threshold *before* the trials, ordeals, and alchemy (learning) really starts to begin. This gateway and its guardians can be seen as a characterization of an epistemological boundary. Using the story "Prince Five-Weapons," Campbell illustrates the quality or condition of the fourth stage for would-be heroes. In short, the Prince, who is really the Buddha, goes forth with five extraordinary weapons only to meet an invincible ogre named "sticky-hair." In the ensuing battle all of the five weapons get stuck to the ogre, but then the Prince reveals a sixth way—"I have in my belly a thunderbolt for weapon ... why should I be afraid? For in one life one death is

absolutely certain” (Campbell, 1949, p. 86). Campbell says that the thunderbolt represents transcendent knowledge that exceeds the five weapons that represent sense, self, and dualities—the “realm” of names and forms. In this stage the boundary is a pivotal struggle with opposites, dualities and polarities. Questors who are unable to shrug off the ego mind are denied the threshold, and cannot enter into the rest of the journey. The hero of the monomyth leaves his “ego” and passes on. The whole notion of the “ego” needs to be explored. It is equated with a particular way of knowing, with the thinking mind. How far do we go back and question our epistemology or ontology?

Embracing new or different ways of knowing is no small feat. “The usual person is more than content, he is even proud, to remain within the indicated bounds, and popular belief gives him every reason to fear so much as the first step into the unexplored” (Campbell, 1949, p. 78). Here, again, is the cultivated fear of the black box of our unconscious. In my teaching, I use a poetry writing prompt from Luis Rodriguez that I learned in Mendocino. In the prompt students are asked to imagine they see the entrance to a pathway that leads into a great forest. The symbol of the forest is supposed to represent their unconscious, or inner world. I have had entire classes where no students go in. They write things like, “I decided not go in, I don’t know what’s in there, and I don’t know what’s going to happen.” When parts of ourselves are “covered” for so long, we may forget how to use them. This part of mythical stories tells the listeners that, perhaps, learning and curriculum start when we let go of our thinking minds. The concept of the inner world was introduced to me by a therapist. My first encounter with a model of the psyche, then, was not as a subject to be studied but something that had to do with my intense instability, and feelings of rage and despair for which I sought help.

Therapy

In many ways, my 13-year relationship with my mentor, Red Bear, was an ongoing directive to stay out of ego, and to “be” in self and soul instead. Campbell’s suggestion that myths are telling people to move into more holistic ways of thinking/being resonated strongly with me after my long familiarity with this concept through Red Bear. In fact, there are many elements of the hero’s journey, my education, and this dissertation that are grounded in my relationship with this mentor.

After talking to one or two therapists whose words slid off me the way algebra curriculum does, Red Bear, LCSW, was recommended by a friend of the family, but with reservations. He was unorthodox. My understanding of Red Bear’s credentials at the time was only that he was mysterious, powerful, and radical. And so began over 13 years of mentorship. We never said therapy or counseling. He beat back the stigma of therapy by framing it as important, serious, intellectual, and moral work. The best way to describe Red Bear is from the outside in. He is a large, fat, Jewish man from New York with red hair and a huge bristling red beard. He is very animated and can go from tears and hugs to balls-out confrontation in seconds. He smokes cigars, always wears a hat, and really does seem like the old man outside the village—with a Bronx accent much like the old man played by Billy Crystal in Rob Reiner’s (1987) *The Princess Bride*. Red Bear was a social worker who failed to get his dissertation thesis at the University of Chicago approved because it was on Carl Jung. Red Bear credits his own mentoring to “Morty,” an iconic figure from New York who ran groups and who apparently knew Jung. Red Bear was famous, using his own word, for alienating the parents, teachers, and other family/community members of his clients. At the time I only knew that I was desperate,

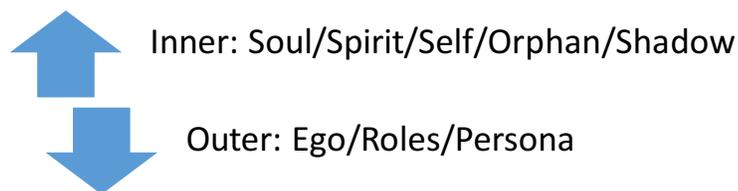
confused, and always afraid. A little while into our relationship, the concept of the “ego” became one of our most important topics.

For Red Bear, “ego” did not denote being egotistical or narcissistic. He was referring to ego as a thinking, rational part of our psyche. For the majority of his clients, according to Red Bear, their major obstacle was getting out of their ego minds. He said that it could take years and often clients were not successful. He said when people were stuck in ego you had to break through it with a battering ram. He then said that he would never do that with me because I had so little ego. Now, my initial elation to hearing about this significant spiritual achievement I had seemingly acquired was short lived. He explained that a lack of ego does not automatically allow someone to step into self-actualization. Instead of dealing with numbing, literal, rationality, I had to deal with the shadow parts of the psyche without the protective ego filter—the *thanatos energy*, or destructive forces, within each of us. For me, he said, “everything gets in.” That statement still burns like a radioactive lodestone in my consciousness—it hit home. “Until you learn to have a stronger sense of ‘self’ everything you encounter will be through the lenses of fear and anger.” I have developed an escapist’s craving for numbness, via alcohol, Prozac, or herd conformity.

I can hear Nurse Ratchet, vicar of the domesticated society, say to me, “You’re too sensitive.” This is something I have heard most of my life—a reaction, perhaps, to my unfiltered emotional being. Red Bear spent most of his time offering counternarratives for me. He suggested that the main goal of most major religious and spiritual practices is to increase sensitivity, awareness, and empathy. I remember later reading in Ray Bradbury’s (1950) *The Martian Chronicles* a story where this filterless existence seemed to be personified and taken to its natural conclusion. In the short story “The Martian,” the title character accepts the projections

of different people it encounters, emotional or otherwise—a lost loved son here, a wife there, a best friend. The Martian shapeshifts and becomes whoever the Earthlings want to see. The Martian cannot shake off these other expectations and perspectives, and flies from one desperate, sadistic encounter to another. Ultimately the Martian is being chased, frantically, by a mob until it dies in an overdose of emotional transference. Bly says of sensitive, empathic men that they are filled with copper—conducting the emotions of everyone around them. Red Bear said that I carried the thanatos energy of others.

Red Bear based his counseling on Carl Jung’s ideas. One of the greatest components of Red Bear’s teachings was his version of Jung’s model of the psyche. I have since found this small graphic to be a potent diagram in the classroom to frame what is generally talked about as self or personality. It is a model, metaphor, a lens. It is here that Red Bear states two fundamental ideas: the ego, roles, and personas are not “us”; and this model reflects society as well as the self, we live in an “ego” society.



According to Red Bear, the healthy personality moves from spirit and soul into self which mediates between the outer mechanisms. In this way the ego is a tool of other parts of the psyche; it gets things done, and it also acts as filter, a defense mechanism to mute our anxieties. Trouble begins when there is little awareness of sense of self and we identify with our ego instead. When the outer world caters to and is made in the image of the ego, this is an easy pattern to slide into. To make matters even worse, Red Bear posed, the orphan and shadow aspects of the psyche, left unchecked by a self, can get through and mediate the ego—so we have

suppressed shadow energy fronting an ego persona. Parker Palmer's (1998) comment about seeing his students "through a lens darkly" when he doesn't know himself resonates here. The classic, quintessential science fiction film *The Forbidden Planet*, directed by Fred M. Wilcox (1956), characterizes this phenomenon with great clarity. A small group of spacefarers are visiting a brilliant scientist and his daughter on Mars. Here is a small family dynamic that is isolated, with a nubile young woman involved, and a shipload of swarthy adventurers. A mysterious, invisible creature begins killing off crew members one by one until it is revealed that the monster is the physical manifestation, in energy form, of the lead scientist's unconscious Thanatos energy—his unconscious rage and will to kill anyone who becomes a sexual threat to his daughter. In all outward ways the scientist is a sensible, hard-working, normal, rather passive, and brilliant man. The fact that he is oblivious to the destructive force of his own shadow energies tells us that he does not know himself.

Dystopian Tales: The Ego Society

Just as commonly as Red Bear referred to the ego within the psyche of an individual, he used the concept to critique our "ego" society, a critique I have since found echoed in many disparate genres. Perhaps the most famous and globally accessible is J. K. Rowling's (1997-2007) *Harry Potter* series, where characters are either wizards, witches, or muggles—the muggles easily representing the normal, ego world. Further the entire zombie genre can be seen as a critique of the ego society. In Fromm's (1956) description of "herd conformity," our lives are defined by routine, and we are expected to present a pleasant, socially acceptable, domesticated personality. Belonging to the herd represents the most effective, stable, reliable and permanent way that humans have used to face the existential void. Aberrations from the norm are

seen as perversions or threats. All kinds of injustices get rationalized in this situation, not just for individuals, but for the society as a whole.

American imperialism marked yet another evolutionary step of the “iron cage” (Takaki, 1979) phenomenon showing a descent from the “corporate” into the “demonic.” Alfred Thayer Mahan’s urging of Americans to view “war as the highest moral expression of American asceticism” (as cited in Takaki, 1979, p. 274) captures the extent to which Puritan suppression has been projected onto the “other.” Corporate monopolies disempowered Americans to the point where they “lacked the community, the sense of collective identity and action to respond effectively” (p. 276). In this new era America’s conquest of the uncivilized and savage was set upon a global scale. The theme of ego epistemologies directing our culture in society can extend to the realm of educational research.

Endarkened Epistemologies

The implications of the ego in regards to self and society has intermingled with my academic studies. This happened very strongly with particular writers but none more strongly than the authors I encountered in a course on the history of black education researchers. In particular, black feminist researchers, such as Cynthia Dillard, Joyce King, Carol D. Lee, and Beverly Gordon, call for research that is involved with different ways of knowing, that is connected to communities, and is about service. They validate the personal, narrative, intuitive parts of themselves as researchers and critique the penchant for ego distancing and objectivity found in most research epistemologies. Minority scholars have felt diminished in the academy and often feel the need to “cover” themselves. Lee (2005) describes a culture of exclusion in the academy based, in part, on the “African American voices of political resistance” (p. 61). She continues:

This silencing of the voices of African American educational researchers, activists, and scholars has not been limited to those who focus on the structural roots of racism in education ... This silencing is reflected in the percentages of African American tenured faculty in major research universities, the low percentage of articles published in major research journals, including all the journals of AERA. (p. 62)

In “The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen: examining an endarkened feminist epistemology in educational research and leadership,” Cynthia Dillard (2000) questions, critiques, unsettles, and disrupts the fundamental processes of research and the canons of knowledge that research has amassed, and exposes its rigidness, “essentialism,” and doubtful claims of legitimacy (p. 670). She also shows how white, entrenched, systems of knowledge and research have embodied and perpetuated racism and oppression, and have excluded marginalized people’s voices, black women’s in particular, and their efforts to change the system. She advocates for an “endarkened feminist epistemology,” which refers to the “historical roots of black, feminist thought,” and is a counterpoint to traditional ways of knowing (p. 662) with which to create new, authentic, alternative, self-determined ways of conducting research.

Endarkened feminist epistemology represents knowledge that is generated by three legacies: black feminism, culturally derived notions of identity, and a culture of oppression and resistance. It necessitates alternative forms of narrative inquiry and an obligation (opportunity) of “responsibility” to the community that was the genesis of the knowledge, the lens, and the research itself (Dillard, 2000). Responsibility also implies a reason or purpose beyond “knowledge” for research—that of transforming, uncovering hidden things. This idea resonates

strongly with Carter G. Woodson's (1933) appeal for the black elite to "look back" and make their success transformative.

In "Coloring Epistemologies: Are Our Research Epistemologies Racially Biased?" Scheurich and Young (2008) challenge us to consider the need to question ourselves as researchers from levels of self to civilization. They argue that racism exists not just within personal, institutional, and societal structures, but within the realm of civilization. This civilizational tier operates on ontological and epistemological levels. They argue that our most basic ways of knowing are biased on, and stem from, a white, Western philosophical orientation that has dominated other ways of knowing.

In other words, our "logics of inquiry" (Stanfield, 1993a) are the social products and practices of the social, historical experiences of Whites, and, therefore these products and practices ... carry forward in the social history of that group and exclude the epistemologies of other social groups. But, again, the critical problem—for all of us, both Whites and people of color—is that the resulting epistemological racism, besides unnecessarily restricting or excluding the range of possible epistemologies, creates profoundly negative consequences for those of other racial cultures with different epistemologies, ontologies, and axiologies. (pp. 8-9)

What is at the heart of this civilization level critique for me is needed criticism of the whole notion of "science" as pure and objective. The knowledge claims, and "knowledge validation processes" serve to protect the hegemony of (white, Western) science as the sole arbiter of "truth."

Behind the Mask

In teaching, the greatest challenge is to make the curriculum meaningful and relevant, yet epistemological cages insist on one, neutral, objective, standardized, efficient and correct way of doing things. How are students to know what is real? Mythology adopts a more multicultural or multi-epistemological approach to meaning that honors kids' inner subjectivities. Using metaphor, symbol, and narrative, and engaging the mind/body/soul, mythology "finds a way" for people to arbitrate their own truths.

Darth Vader is the poster child for repressed shadow, and in Lucas' films he commands the entire "Republic," an interstellar society, with an iron hand, through austerity and punishment. He holds his "workers" accountable. Assessments are instantaneous, public, and of the highest stakes. In the first movie there are several officers who are dispatched on the bridge of the star destroyer. The storm troopers are children of "the white fog," drones cloned from one ruthless, efficient, and uncritical good worker. They are covered in so much white plastic armor, a nameless and faceless obedient herd. It is an interesting image to think of how an army of "white" soldiers are commanded by the shadow. Only those close to Vader, like Yoda, know that deep beneath the ego and even the shadow issues are orphan ones. Behind the face of doom a hurt boy suffers.

Why do we "like" these images? Why are they so pervasive in popular culture? Even given the appropriation of such iconography by purveyors of commodified culture, they are "liked" for a reason. Despite the dampening and damning veil of ego, the images of dream and myth persist. "Where would they go?" Red Bear would ask. The disconnect between the intelligent and purposeful use of these icons and their presence on lunch bags, backpacks, car window stickers, etc., is both ironic and absurd. In regards to my own story, my fascination with

the images of Vader and many comic book characters is, perhaps, really a longing for a deeper and more spiritual kind of learning.

Chapter VI: The Belly of the Whale

Who Dares to Certify?

Story

My name is Joe. Maeve and I felt the draw last night in our courtyard staircase. The night air was filled with the reverberating hush and swish we knew to be the surf. There was cool wind and a slightly acrid smell. Was it the quiet time after the evening meal, the absence of revving cars and buses, their horns and tires sirening, or was it the tempest, coming out the west, pushing the waves assertively into the shore that made it so we could hear the swell so well? We decided to go visit the ocean post dusk. This was a clandestine activity. Mama was working late, it was essentially Maeve's bedtime, but this was a high priority—like art supplies, fresh fruit, and dancing ... we needed the experience. Maeve likes forays outside of the “special world of childhood.” I shrugged off the irresponsible parent voices; this was good curriculum. We walked to the corner and turned into the wind, the two blocks to the beach. The sky was telling a dramatic story—black purple, horizontal gates squeezing a dying ember of pale yellow. The earth's rotation would put an end to that soon; besides, high above us a crescent moon was gathering its own luminescence. The San Francisco pedestrian walkways are a sacred space. This is a code that is vigorously followed; cars will stop, and wait patiently, for pedestrians—even a greying, long-haired man and a kindergarten girl with clothes flapping in the wind, rushing to the indomitable dark of the dunes and ocean beyond. On the other side of Ocean Beach there is no sidewalk, just the steep embankment of a three-story dune. We crossed the last street and clambered past the traffic light, similar to Lucy's encounter with the lamp post in C. S. Lewis's (1950) *Narnia*. We padded up and up between two bluffs and felt the full weight of the wind and the sound of surf. Like vertigo, the ocean pulled us to discover its secrets in the dark.

There was something terrifying being next to so much energy in the darkness. It was a hundred or so yard walk to the threshold. We couldn't make out details in the sand so we glided into this soft, yielding terrain, the last light of a fretful sky and the reflected white-tops of waves showing us the way. When we arrived within the foam's reach, it seemed, impossibly, that the ocean had become intimate. The darkness that hid the expansive seascape showed us only a small, lapping touch. Sound defined this demense, and touch: the buffeting wind and sloshing shore. We stood there, silently, for many long moments, evolution's prodigy looking back at its womb. I was trying to sense the connection, understand why there is such a draw and excitement coming here. After a time, I felt satisfied, like reaching the end of a story, and felt it was time to say goodnight and go back to the brightly lit little box we called home.

At the end of her kindergarten year, Maeve crossed another threshold, sponsored by her school: the kindergarten graduation ceremony. I chose a seat near the center aisle, perhaps 10 rows back, thinking this would allow me a good gander at her, and that she could see me, too. I was early. Like the seagulls that descend and mob the possibility of food, so that all can be seen on the ground is a flurry of white and gray feathers, and screeching, gaping beaks, the parents began standing up one by one, smartphones in hand, to capture the moment. Soon all I saw was a line of black coat backs. This was one of life's absurd moments for me. I looked left and right, laughed, and wondered if I should start elbowing my way into the fray, so that my daughter would see me advocating for her. Many onlookers were holding their phones above their heads, like the paparazzi. There was an urgency about it, a need to capture this moment, to record it. I imagined what the children saw ... a quickly forming concave, an array of black phones with red glowing indicator lights. Did I see the ubiquitous camera smile start to bloom across the stage? Yes, crooked, frozen, Stepford smiles on a hundred 6-year-olds mimicking their parents'

urgency, soaking up the hidden curriculum of this ceremony. Through shoulders I glanced my daughter's face, smiling also. This feverish crowd was taking this threshold moment and turning it to stone.

Campbell

Campbell (1949) uses the iconic image of the swallowing leviathan to introduce the next stage in the hero's journey. Perhaps the pull of our nighttime ocean walk was a longing to meet some emissary from the deep. All would-be heroes and heroines need to follow Jonah through two vicious rows of razor teeth into the dark, cavernous inner world of the whale. To the outside observer, and to the literalists, the hero appears to die. If we stayed in the literal realm we might hope the hero could be saved, or perhaps view this as a kind of first trial. The scene would morph into a quest for escape, to see whether the hero could cut himself out, emerge, kill the whale and return to the world! We are afraid of our hero "self" dying. In understanding the story metaphorically, such a feat would be complete folly. Campbell goes on to explain that metaphorically this is really the beginning of doing the inner work, following the inner road. The mouth and teeth of the whale are gates to be passed, for the worthy, in order to continue the metamorphosis inside (Campbell, 1949, p. 92). The opposite rows of teeth represent our world of contradictions and dualities, and we need to pass these toothy threshold guardians. The monster leviathan becomes the womb, the inner landscape where the real traveling is done. These images also symbolize a "death" for the ego of the hero, a necessary event for him or her to go deeper into the journey. Campbell also uses the image of the temple entrance to illustrate this idea. The pillars are carved with the images of fearsome guardians, like the teeth in the mouth of the whale, and the only way to "pass the test" in this gateway is to die to our ego self: "the passage of the threshold is a form of self-annihilation ...the hero goes inward, to be born again" (p. 91).

Whether the whale, temple, cave, hole, or myriad other space, these images convey “in picture language, the life-centering, life-renewing act” (p. 92), which is a far cry from a supposed gory death.

The shift into metaphorical analysis is exciting; these are powerful images for growth. A similar scene from the film *Star Wars* now makes more sense. In the scene, Luke’s mentor, Obi-Wan Kenobi is seen dueling Darth Vader with energy sabers. At one point Obi-Wan stops fighting, turns off his sword and allows Vader to kill him. Interestingly, the body disappears instead of falling to the floor in a bloody mess. Later we see Obi-Wan return in a kind of spectral state and it is made known that although he has died, he is now even more powerful than he was before. Another familiar symbol of crossing the threshold and entering into the inner world is the rabbit hole that swallows Alice in Carroll’s (1865) *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*.

Curricular Implications

In a nutshell, this stage is about a boundary between the outer, literal world, and the inner world. We fear the teeth, but the belly of the whale is exactly where we want to be, for it is the hero’s second womb. Curricular implications are tentative and imaginative. The stage implies a certain amount of deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge. There is also the sense that the hero/learner needs to enter into a zone of uncertainty. There are no stated objectives written on the board. There is no syllabus with dates, rubrics, and assignment descriptions. There is no “treatment specification” (Schubert, 2009a, p. 80) when entering the belly.

One way this stage might inform teaching and learning is by focusing on those conditions in the belly, or the inner sanctum of the temple, or the dark fecundity of the cave as accoutrements of the learning environment. In the retreats in Mendocino the “work” we do is in a 1920s era lodge. The lodge is partitioned down into smaller spaces through the use of benches,

tables, and tapestries. There is a large fireplace at one side. The outer seats are raised. We are packed in there, ready to be baked. There is a concerted design to our gathering space on the retreats. All energy is focused in that space; it doesn't leak out. Michael Meade's words, "This is an alchemical vessel," struck a chord. He was speaking about the lodge and greater camp in the woodland valley that we lived in for 5 days, but he was also speaking about the story we heard together, and how our stories intersected with it and each other's. It was a space for listening and speaking—for sharing, unscripted, from the heart. The conditions for powerful learning were present in those spaces. We were swallowed by Mendocino—removed from contact from the outside world, called in day after day to bear witness to ourselves and each other. It was not really a "retreat" in the sense that you relax and meditate—it was one kind of "hard work." Van Manen (1986) captures this idea of space beyond the physical in *The Tone of Teaching*. In his description, the physical space takes second stage to the psychological, emotional, tonal, and arguably spiritual vessel that teachers create through their words, touches, even glances, and also through the way curriculum and ways of being are embodied. Meade often talked about the need for "instant community" in a mass society. We need to create community in the places and spaces available to us in the modern world. Today's classroom seems like such a space, but it can be found in even more ephemeral moments.

I recall walking towards a party on the top floor of the Hyatt in New Orleans. The Division B post-meeting party had no music, no drinks, and no raucous revelry, although there was revelry of a different kind. Isabel and I walked into a scene, a space that immediately spoke to our senses as having the timbre of gravitas, as that most courageous of actions was apparent—vulnerability. Two elders, Grace Lee Boggs, who had just received the Ella Baker/Septima Clark award, and her introducer, Vincent Harding, were leading a conversation of sorts. The lights

were low, people were seated around a table, but these details blurred as the focus was on the story being unfurled in real time as people shared intimate stories about their childhood, parents, and struggles. No one told us what to do. After several people spoke we knew that we needed to answer three questions: What is your mother's mother's name, what is her story, and what is the important work you are doing right now? The prompts were simple and designed. We were invited, in the sudden present moment, to reconceptualize our lived experience.

Critique

Our diplomas, certificates, awards, honors, medals, degrees, and other official artifacts testifying to our skills, abilities, mastery, and legitimacy represent our modern gateways. We dress in robes; we walk across a threshold upon a stage; we receive a degree much like the scarecrow receiving his “diploma” from the Wizard of Oz into his straw hand. Theosophical interpretations of the scarecrow say that he represents our intelligence and intellect. All through the story he feels stupid until his audience with the wizard, who despite the pomp and circumstance has the decency to point out that, as the one who comes up with the clever plans to save his companions, he had his smarts *inside* all along. The message seems to be: We don't need external validation in the form of teachers, mentors, and wizards. (I still want my diploma.) Certifying on external authority that is not derived from one's “inner being,” Schubert (2009) declares, does not have integrity: “Really, who dares to certify? Who really knows what is embodied in another, derived from any experience—school or non-school?” (p. 23). In terms of the outer world, Aronowitz (2004) claims that our tokens of achievement are equally invalid: even as politicians and educators decry social promotion, and most high schools with working-class constituencies remain aging vats, mass higher education is, to a great extent, a holding pen: effectively masking unemployment and underemployment ... the

working-class students are able, even encouraged, to enter universities and colleges at the bottom of the academic hierarchy—community colleges but also public four-year colleges—thus fulfilling the formal pledge of equal opportunity for class mobility even as most of these institutions suppress the intellectual content that would fulfill the mobility promise. (p. 19)

The running of the race/maze that begins in kindergarten continues all the way up through higher education and the acquirement of terminal degrees.

High-stakes Kindergarten

The scene at my daughter's kindergarten graduation intensified as the children's songs were reaching the end. Maeve's threshold moment—to commemorate her first year in public school—was obscured to me by this mob of parents who were going to preserve this moment, whether their neighbor liked it or not! Getting the video, acquiring the picture, grasping for the diploma: These are the pinnacle moments we paid for, we have a right to. Alfie Kohn's (1998) article "Only for my Kid: How Privileged Parents Undermine School Reform" reveals the underlying predation of middle-class parents upon one another in order to get ahead in the game of schooling. In a culture built upon competition, the paranoia of everyday people gets ratcheted up. How can so much reckless obsession not "trickle down" into the lifeworlds of kids--their little kindergarten rooms microcosms of society. This attempt to reconceptualize my own curriculum of lived experiences as a student, teacher, and now parent makes the competitive nature of schooling vividly clear.

Chapter VII: The Road of Trials

He's a Good Worker

Action Movies

It really does seem as if the heart of all narratives revolves around the trials and tribulations faced by the protagonist. Conflicts drive plots, from epic myths to comic strips to lived lives. In stage 6, the “Road of Trials,” Campbell describes the rather long middle stage of initiation—a period of overcoming difficulties. This is the stage of the journey where the hero must slay dragons, solve riddles, and complete impossible tasks all with the help of supernatural aid. Campbell’s hero is now entering into “a favorite phase of the myth-adventure. It has produced a world literature of miraculous tests and ordeals” (Campbell, 1949, p. 97). This may be an understatement. Hollywood, however, has become fixated on the climax, prolonging and exaggerating it to the point that there is no point anymore, except it seems, to be lost in a cataclysmic series of escalating ordeals—the latest blockbuster sees California drop into the ocean in the film by Brad Peyton (2015), *San Andreas*. It seems that each new protagonist vies for ever greater, apocalyptic stakes. The directors take this stage too literally---they associate the gravitas of the trials with grandiosity. The action film hero looms large as an iconic American character type, calling to mind the familiar gendered images of the tough-as-nails, muscled, stoic man. More often than not the femme fatale heroines adopt the same characteristics, possessing incredible and lethal fighting skills and arcane knowledge of high-tech weaponry. These partners endure chases of all sorts, legions of enemies, and explosions, and demonstrate proficient skill in operating any kind of machinery. Some of these films, such as *The Matrix* (1999), contain some powerful metaphors and imbue a sense of philosophy. More often than not, however, the directors miss the point of all these epic struggles.

Campbell

Across the globe and throughout time, the epic mythologies of Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, etc., do include a series of bewildering escapades. Stories tell of the hero jumping buck-naked into boiling water and springing out clean and whole, of a wild, hairy man lying in the bottom of a pond in a deep dark forest, of a half boy meeting his other half in a river and immediately attacking it, and many, many more. Yet, each image and sequence is laden, heavily, with symbolic meaning. Each task represents a descending into even greater tests that have little to do with actual physical strength, and that often involve the “death” of the hero on some level. It’s as if the rugged cowboy who rides into the sunset pulls out a yoga mat and begins the real work of self-awareness and eliminating the mind-body dualism. The metaphoric meaning behind all the symbols is that “the work” is spiritual work. It is the tempering of selves. It has to do with maturation, growth, and descent towards self-actualization. Campbell (1949) explains:

And so it happens that if anyone—in whatever society—undertakes for himself the perilous journey into the darkness by descending, either intentionally or unintentionally, into the crooked lanes of his own spiritual labyrinth, he soon finds himself in a landscape of symbolical figures ... in a vocabulary of more modern turn: this is the process of dissolving, transcending, or transmuting the infantile images of our personal past. In our dreams the ageless perils, gargoyles, trials, secret helpers, and instructive figures are nightly still encountered: and in their forms we may see reflected not only the whole picture of our present case, but also the clue to what we must do to be saved. (Campbell, 1949, p. 101)

What is the essential quest/danger? Campbell uses the myth of the Goddess Inanna, of Sumerian origin, to portray the essential task of the hero during the stage of trials: In the myth

the Goddess Inanna descends into the netherworld to confront her sister and enemy, Ereshkigal. This image of two, polarized symbols of power confronting each other, Campbell says, “in the antique manner of symbolization,” represent two parts of one being. The idea, again, is for the hero to find synthesis by abolishing the ego and its compartments. The essential task for the hero throughout these trials is simple to describe—to confront the dualities of his or her existence. It is a continuation of the task of eliminating the ego self. Campbell makes it clear that this is a process that occurs again, and again, and again. The time in mythical stories does not equate with real time; the period of slaying dragons may last decades.

How often do we confront our struggles, our trials, without any context of deeper meaning? Myth offers a potentially secular model for us to make sense out of what’s happening in our lives. Meade says that we need structures, containers, and guides for this. He argues that we have lost the ability to see in mythic, initiatory ways. The closest we come is psychology. On retreats I have seen a story capture and hold a hundred men’s unique experiences—their unique, justified pain and struggle from rape, murder, incest, and the deaths of children. Too often we take students’ “real lives” and ask them to be ignored, deferred, as the business of school is resumed. In the most facetious way, we tell students that by being good students, they will overcome their real life struggles—the message of conformity and merit. How many students look back and recognize, note, keep in their hearts those “mentors” whose work was more than academic instruction, it was the work of being “seen” (van Manen, 1986). This is a profound aspect of myth and initiation. Meade talks extensively of “wounds,” and says that a person doesn’t know him or herself until they have gotten to know these places of hurt. As we compartmentalize every aspect of our being, the young human beings who come into our classrooms are told again, and again, that there is no one listening, there is no lesson, no

environment to contain, arguably, the most important aspects of yourselves. Campbell notes the different spaces that prior cultures made for initiation versus our modern world:

There can be no question: the psychological dangers through which earlier generations were guided by the symbols and spiritual exercises of their mythological and religious inheritance, we today (in so far as we are unbelievers, or, if believers, in so far as our inherited beliefs fail to represent the real problems of contemporary life) must face alone, or, at best, with only tentative, impromptu, and not often very effective guidance. This is our problem as modern, “enlightened” individuals, for whom all gods and devils have been rationalized out of existence. (Campbell, 1949, p. 104)

For those earlier generations the shaman were the ones who held and implemented this curriculum. Campbell says that such persons occupied a central place in communities and that they were often “psychotic or neurotic,” in order to carry others’ emotional demons. Instead of occupying the most prestigious role in the community, the nonconforming, sensitive, creative, imaginative, empathetic, and extrasensory people are vilified today. It is as if the closer modern human beings and their ways of knowing and being get to heart and soul, the more savagely they are demonized.

Time of Ordeals Appropriated: The Good Worker

This boilerplate structure in stories, the series of conflicts a character faces, represents, perhaps, another way to appropriate the uses of stories. If the time of ordeals is hardwired into our consciousness, if we are preternaturally programmed to take up these tasks, how subtle a shift is needed to rephrase adventure, ordeal, and trial into *work*. The daily grind of slaying dragons has become the meaning of our lives—we go to work to battle the ogres, come home and do it all again. The work ethic is wedded to the story structure. Work is an “ordeal” that is a

necessary virtue: The good worker, the hard worker, is the paragon of moral worth. This has become one of the most unshakable, purportedly self-evident truths in our culture. “He is a good worker,” I remember my mother saying to ... just about anyone who had ears. It was a key attribute that she seemed to want to get across. Being a hard worker was the bedrock of her value system. More than any other sensitive topic that I broach in my classes and attempt to make strange, questioning the notion of “hard work” reaps the most vehement resistance.

Jean Anyon’s (1980) germinal piece “Social Class and the Hidden Curriculum of Work” portrays how schooling trains working-class kids for routinized, low-skill, repetitive work. She describes dynamics by which school structures and curriculum shape and condition young minds to become compliant, obedient workers. The teachers rarely explain why the work is being assigned, how it might connect to other assignments, or what the idea is that lies behind the procedure or gives it coherence and perhaps meaning or significance.

De Lissovoy (2015) says that the ideology of work has moved into new ground under current neoliberal controls of education: The work world and work have colonized the school, hearts, and minds of students more than it ever did—it seemed to be working just fine for my mother and millions of others who believed in hard work. Perhaps the only way to not offer an honest day’s pay was to go even further. De Lissovoy says:

In a society in which the market has already effectively instituted itself as the inner and essential meaning, and in which ever more of the subject’s potentialities are mined and reorganized within the market’s logic, it is no longer as important to inculcate a particular mind-set; instead, the point is to ever more continuously organize and verify the subject as the effect or property of control (assessment) itself. Educational accountability, as one of the crucial instances of a proliferating “auditing culture” (Fisher, 2009, p. 50) in post-

Fordism, substitutes the continuous control of dispersed, provisional, and precarious identities for the disciplinary production of ideologically self-governing, autonomous subjects. (pp. 37-38)

Orwell (1949) captures all of this succinctly and vividly in the character of the hard working horse, Boxer, in *Animal Farm*. The horse who, when confronted with continued, escalating demands for more austerity from the leadership class represented by the pigs, takes up the noble ethic of working harder and harder as it has become his blind moral code. Eventually Boxer collapses from exhaustion, and to reward him for his troubles he is sold to the renderers. A similar image is shown in the film *Cloud Atlas* (Tyker, Wachowski, & Wachowski, 2012), where the fabricants, genetically engineered slave workers, are “recycled” in a slaughterhouse despite being told they will be set free after their servitude is complete.

Real Work

Fromm (1956) offers a dramatically different picture of what hard work looks like:

By “activity” in the modern usage of the word, is usually meant an action which brings about a change in an existing situation by means of an expenditure of energy. Thus a man is considered active if he does business, studies medicine, works on an endless belt, builds a table, or is engaged in sports. Common to all these activities is that they are directed toward an outside goal to be achieved. What is not taken into account is the motivation of the activity. Take for instance a man driven to incessant work by a sense of deep insecurity and loneliness; or another one driven by ambition, or greed for money. In all these cases the person is the slave of a passion, and his activity is in reality a “passivity” because he is driven; he is the sufferer, not the “actor.” On the other hand, a man sitting quiet and contemplating, with no purpose or aim except that of experiencing

himself and his oneness with the world, is considered to be “passive,” because he is not “doing” anything. In reality, this attitude of concentrated meditation is the highest activity there is, an activity of the soul, which is possible only under the condition of inner freedom and independence. (pp. 19-20)

When Bill Ayers (personal communication, 2013) speaks of being a kindergarten teacher, he says that it is highly demanding “intellectual and moral work.” Critical theorists offer clear, tangible applications for the hard work of schooling. Freire (1993) often talks about the “tasks” of students, teachers, and society when taking up the work of critical pedagogy. He calls us to undertake critical awareness of self, and the work of building new worlds:

Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators. (p. 51)

De Lissovoy (2015) echoes Freire, and takes up the call for the hard work of creating new worlds, commons, and community. He describes the struggle over being that involves radical ontological and epistemological transformations (p. 167). The work of schools, curriculum and education is akin to the intellectual and spiritual work the hero undergoes in Campbell’s vision of growth.

Chapter VIII: Meeting with the Goddess

We are the Frog that Gets Kissed

Regular Guy

I used to think I was a regular guy. I had no idea how adamant, how ingrained, how natural a feeling this “identity” was. A friend of mine I knew back in my 20s, a punk rocker girl named Meg, said as much, “You know what I like about you, Joe, you’re just a regular guy ... you drive a stick-shift truck, you’re a landscaper, you wear jeans and work boots”—all this she said to me, along with a few more signifiers, as we lurched and bucked in my Chevy S10 towards Chicago. I smiled and felt the comfort of conforming. I liked this image of myself and the fact that this female friend saw it so clearly in me. A major part of being a regular guy, I surmised, was dating girls ... an enterprise that would eventually lead to “getting the girl,” which is a prelude to getting married, as the “story” goes. This was essentially the only story I was familiar with. Although Meg was just a friend, in a deeper part of myself I considered her a potential mate, an eligibility that I bestowed generously upon practically any female encompassed within my moving field of vision, as my desire for sex, as has been mentioned, was paramount. To borrow mythical language, I was seeing the Goddess in everywoman. There was a desire, a lure—I was captivated with this idea of wooing. This characterization resonated well with how my pack of male friends, and society in general, appears to approach the heterosexual courting rituals. Campbell (1949) suggests that the encounter with the “sleeping woman” is the penultimate trial. He goes on to say that the “ultimate adventure, when all the barriers and ogres have been overcome, is commonly represented as a mystical marriage of the triumphant hero-soul with the Queen Goddess of the World” (p. 109). This description brings up fairy tale images of Snow White, or any Stepford princess for that matter, and represents the climax of the road of

trials as the hero is often seen stealing away into the highest tower, the deepest chamber toward a scene of bliss: The hero encounters “the most beautiful woman in the world,” and what so often happens is that the two get married and live happily ever after. This is the part of the images of being that I was subscribing to. This is what we expect in the popular culture, in Disney films. To the extent that I understood my own, complex, and nuanced identity was the extent that I beheld the Goddess—as a pretty princess in need of being possessed. Our notions of idealized, or romantic, love are neatly captured by Hallmark greeting cards. The popular conceptions of love and marriage have become so tangential to the original meaning of the meeting with the Goddess that they are absurd in many ways. So have many of the critiques of this popular narrative that would have the princess save the hero, and then *not* get married. This is not a story of boy meets girl, or girl meets boy ...nor is it a story about girl saving herself and rising in the ranks to run the kingdom. Myth tells us: Boy is girl, and girl is boy.

Campbell and Meeting with Goddess

When the façade of literalism is taken away, the image of the Goddess and the energies she represents become vastly more complex. Campbell (1949) makes several points in describing the significance of the Goddess. At first glance, the images he describes are the ones we are all familiar with: the sleeping beauty and nourishing mother:

She is the paragon of all paragons of beauty, the reply to all desire, the bliss-bestowing goal of every hero’s earthly and unearthly quest. She is mother, sister, mistress, bride. Whatever in the world has lured, whatever has seemed to promise joy, has been premonitory of her existence—in the deep of sleep, if not in the cities and forests of the world. For she is the incarnation of the promise of perfection; the soul’s assurance that, at

the conclusion of its exile in a world of organized inadequacies, the bliss that once was known will be known again. (pp. 110-111)

According to Campbell, the significance of the feminine goes far beyond the pleasant, hard-working moms we see in commercials, who “nurture” their families by purchasing various cleaning products and food items. The Goddess represents the salve to Fromm’s (1956) greatest “problem” for humanity. Even this enlarged notion of what lies within a sleeping beauty does not reveal the full nature of the feminine. What’s often not shown, seen, and remembered are the “bad” sides of this mother—the absent, the forbidding, the incestuous woman. Campbell relates the Hindu story about the beautiful, pregnant maid who steps from the river Ganges, delivers a healthy baby boy, starts to suckle him, and then suddenly “changes aspect,” becoming a grotesque monster and consuming the baby before returning to the waters (Campbell, 1949, p. 115). The Goddess Kali is a symbol that contains both beautiful and terrifying characteristics: She is a nurturer and protector, but also a destroyer bearing a long red tongue, a necklace of skulls, and a skirt of severed arms. What aspect of the goddess does a hero meet?

Woman, in the picture language of mythology, represents the totality of what can be known. The hero is the one who comes to know. As he progresses in the slow initiation which is life, the form of the goddess undergoes for him a series of transfigurations: she can never be greater than himself, though she can always promise more than he is yet capable of comprehending. (Campbell, 1949, p. 116)

We all get what we deserve. For starters, she appears in forms that are commensurate with the hero’s stature, or level of maturity. The tale of Actaeon is described by Campbell (1949) as an example of the immature encounter, and it might be useful in taming the vagaries of fraternities. In this story the hero spies the beautiful, lustful Goddess Diana bathing in a pool.

One could imagine the modern scene consisting of the young, or old, man at the computer surfing the internet's vast cache of naked female forms. Diana flings water at him, casts a spell, and he turns into a white stag which ironically gets run down and killed by his own hounds and men. The hero who meets the goddess with "animal desire" is destroyed. Like the temple guardians at the first thresholds, the teeth of the whale, and the ogre of phenomenality, the hero is vulnerable.

For those able, through experience and countless quests, to finally kiss the old hag or frog, see the many aspects of the goddess, and behold the nature of reality, then the Goddess becomes for him:

the womb and the tomb: the sow that eats her farrow. Thus she unites the "good" and the "bad," exhibiting the two modes of the remembered mother, not as personal only, but as universal. The devotee is expected to contemplate the two with equal equanimity.

Through this exercise his spirit is purged of its infantile, inappropriate sentimentalities and resentments, and his mind opened to the inscrutable presence which exists, not primarily as "good" and "bad" with respect to his childlike human convenience, his weal and woe, but as the law and image of the nature of being. (Campbell, 1949, p. 114)

The import here is that the hero is encountering "difficult knowledge" about the world and himself, and that the mystical union has to do with holding the contradictions of opposites, the different aspects of the life-giving and -destroying nature of our world in hand. This is why, perhaps, Campbell calls it the ultimate adventure. It is the ultimate test that began all the tests—can I let go of ego and embrace life's dualities? Myth offers a fluidity and plurality to understanding about sex, gender, and sexuality through its language of metaphor, image and symbolism and connection to spirituality. The marriage is akin to the person finding a balance

within their own gender spectrum. Campbell makes it clear that this stage of the journey applies to the heroine as well as the hero. The idea that the woman, or female, is the source of nurturing is not the point. Myth imbues these images with such complexity, plurality, and detail that each “contains multitudes.” Somehow we have reduced our understanding of them to the debilitating, rigid norms we encounter today.

Pedagogical Function

Campbell (1949) describes direct attempts to use this powerful idea of the mystical marriage in a pedagogic way: “there has been also, in numerous religious traditions, a consciously controlled pedagogical utilization of this archetypal image for the purpose of the purging, balancing, and initiation of the mind into the nature of the visible world” (p. 113).

Although there are many ways that this stage can inform curriculum theory, there are three that stand out: the need to address real, critical, social issues; the salience of queer theory and the teaching of sexuality; and the cultivation of an aesthetic sensibility.

Real World

I recall reading “The Three Billy Goat’s Gruff” to a group of preschool-aged children in a very poor school on Chicago’s West Side. The pictures were vivid, brilliant, and dynamic. Although I was the substitute teacher, I was visited by a district reading specialist who was assigned to observe that classroom for the day. During a break, she said we needed to cull the book I had—it was too violent. Critical reconstructionist scholarship offers a canon of theory and practice that allows students to interrogate the conditions of their existence. The renowned psychologist Carl Rogers (1961), when asked to consider the implications of teaching and learning, viewed curriculum that does not deal with pressing student concerns as invalid. Similarly, Smith, Stanley and Shores (1950) argue for learning that focuses on learner interests,

but that also coincide with the real world. They argue for a core curriculum that is designed around “crucial problems,” not as something to learn about abstractly, or decontextualized as issues affecting the “other,” but ultimately as ways of imagining “what should (could) be” (p. 519). James Beane (1993) also argues that we need to match student interests with real world issues by linking their adolescent concerns to their counterpoints in the larger society. Queer theory, bracing itself on the back of psychotherapy and postmodernism, also seeks for intimate knowledge of power, but also how power plays out in the inner world.

Queer Theory

Where queer theory and Campbell’s mythology meet is in the denial of binaries, dualities, and frozen stories; they enter the contradictions and look for possibilities and pluralities. They both seek unfettered identities. They contain multitudes, like the Pantheon of Hindu Gods and the fractals in Islamic architecture. Resolving contradictions is about holding them, being with them, and going deeper. Normative identities and signifiers do not tell deeper stories about the nature of our humanity and inner world. The goddess in all aspects is akin to the spectrum view of sex, gender, and sexuality. What if the feminine is seen as something more than acquisition and consumption, but an irretrievable part of ourselves and the world—ingrained and embedded—instead of a trophy, something to be possessed? Myth takes sex, sexuality, and gender and sets it within a deeper, spiritual context of potential meanings.

The Subtle Knife Connoisseur:

Campbell’s discussion of this stage does not stop with describing the mystical marriage; he offers a *currere* for how to get there. What skills or attributes does the hero need? Campbell ends his comments on this stage by suggesting that in approaching the Goddess, that the “hero should be endowed with what the troubadours and minesingers termed the “gentle heart”

(Campbell, 1949, p. 118). In Pullman's (2007) *His Dark Materials* series, one of the main protagonists, a boy named Will, is given an amazing magical item—the subtle knife. With it he can open worlds ... literally. In this trilogy there are innumerable parallel worlds that occur simultaneously to ours and the boy must learn, carefully, to use the phallic knife to make cuts in order to open possibilities. It is an allegory of an adolescent boy learning about his own sexuality. Elliot Eisner's (1998) work on connoisseurship shares many attributes of Campbell's call for “gentleness” in understanding the subtle, sensual, aesthetic ways of knowing the world and oneself.

A Regular Non-normative Guy

Notice again, the boy driving in his little blue pick-up truck, driving downtown through geopolitics that he is not aware of. The curriculum of the Goddess was denied; the boy has no idea about the larger issues of life and little about himself—he is domesticated libido. The Midwestern and sexually repressed boy in the blue truck meets L.A. Latina who was the winner of an S&M contest. My unofficial course in queer theory was under the tutelage of Isabel Nunez. Our friendship and then courtship was set within a dramatic scene of massive philosophical debates between postmodern and existentialist interpretations of sexuality.

What aspect of the goddess did I meet, have I met? Awareness spreads like a dawning horror changing the landscape of my interior world in strange, terrifying ways. How did the world really see me all this time—a very effeminate, sensitive, emotional boy. I remember my friend Mike's father exclaiming to him on the phone once, after he just heard from Mike that he and I had reunited 20 years after high school, “Joe ... isn't he gay?” This was the comment that caused me to investigate, although Red Bear had explained all this to me before. He had said that I was

an artistic, sensitive, “feminine” guy living in a world that does not look kindly on those attributes.

Seriously, if the world is a stage, at least myth offers students a pluralistic cornucopia of images, styles, metaphors, symbols, and stories of monsters, gods, and crickets—instead of the tired, tired, boy-drives-pickup kinds of stories. It is sad and ironic that this image of troubadour resonates most strongly with me. All the parts of myself that I hated were, like a curse, the parts that burned most brightly.

Chapter IX: Woman as Seductress

Power and Integrity

Story

We were in the mall. I was staring at the cadre of plastic mannequins who greet customers at the entrance of Old Navy. A couple of plastic men, women and children, one or two having dark complexions, were dressed in casual shorts and tops in bright, primary colors. It was a beach scene, with folding chairs, blankets and a multi-colored ball. How pleasant. Isabel and Maeve were paying for something we bought. The checkout line weaved through twenty feet of shelving filled with gadgets and candy marketed directly to the minds of children. I was standing outside on the lacquered brickwork in the concourse and already know that Maeve would want to play on the animatronic vehicles behind me. She was too scared for us to put in the coins that would make them move; she just wanted to play in them. After this we walked another 20 feet to the children's play area. There is a low plastic wall with benches lining the inside and shoe cubbies near the entrance. A dozen or so rubbery, plastic animal sculptures adorn the floor. This children's corral is a busy affair; kids would romp, squeal, climb animals, and chase each other as dads and moms took a break. It was a space for children and families.

Immediately opposite my view were several vivid scenes of lurid flesh—photographs that extend from the floor to the ceiling of practically naked women in suggestive poses. I saw full, burgeoning breasts, hips, thighs, stomachs in high definition. Every supple and sinuous line taunted the imagination. Actaeon would flee. There were six or seven of these mural-sized photos—it was like sex on a wall. The slap and sledgehammer incongruence between Victoria's Secret and the play area for small children did not phase me. I barely registered this bizarre exploitation. It was so normal.

Campbell

Campbell (1949) presents a couple of ideas in the eighth stage. He starts by saying that the outcome of a person's encounter with the goddess, the mystical marriage, and the capacity to "endure the full possession of the mother-destroyer, his inevitable bride" (pg. 21) is a kind of progress monitoring measurement tool:

The whole sense of the ubiquitous myth of the hero's passage is that it shall serve as a general pattern for men and women, wherever they may stand along the scale. Therefore it is formulated in the broadest terms. The individual has only to discover his own position with reference to this general human formula, and let it then assist him past his restricting walls. Who and where are his ogres? Those are the reflections of the unsolved enigmas of his own humanity. What are his ideals? Those are the symptoms of his grasp of life. (p. 121)

Apart from this diagnostic utility of myth, the real import of this chapter is to describe what goes terribly wrong when the feminine aspect isn't appropriately integrated into the psyche. Campbell goes on to describe how, in therapy, people usually don't want to look at the "ugly" parts and faults in themselves. The refusal or failure to integrate the feminine in our selves is myth's way, according to Campbell, of describing the effects of sexual repression. His words are poetic, succinct, and incisive in this regard:

Where this Oedipus-Hamlet revulsion remains to beset the soul, there the world, the body, and woman above all, become the symbols no longer of victory but of defeat. A monastic-puritanical, world-negating ethical system then readily and immediately transfigures all the images of myth. No longer can the hero rest in innocence with the goddess of the flesh; for she is become the queen of sin. (p. 123)

This “world-negating ethical system” that is part of the deep structure of society is embodied within each person’s inner world. My child played on plastic animals with dumb domesticated looks on their faces while I looked up from my smartphone to secretly, shamefully, take in those massive breasts. How many, like myself, are compelled in their gaze at the nakedness of the goddess. The opposite polemic to this pornographic display embedded in our cultural mores quickly gets me to revert my eyes. Here is the push and pull—the desire and the shame, the contradiction around sexuality that is germinal to American culture.

It really does seem as if the most vilified, what’s perceived as the most despicable human acts, revolve around sexuality. There is no mercy, no restitution, no salvation for the sexual criminals. Other societal offenders may suffer guilt, but sex offenders suffer shame. Director Nicole Kassell (2004) explores the humanity of the sex offender in the film *The Woodsman*. The main character, played by Kevin Bacon, is portrayed in a very “gentle” way as person with an addiction, and we are encouraged to view him with empathy. One of the messages in the film seems to be that in some ways, we are all addicts.

Exploring the sexual exploitation of women, and of the sexuality of human beings in general, calls to mind the multibillion dollar pornography industry, marketing itself into the senses, hearts, and minds of any child or adolescent able to log onto the internet. My first image of the goddess was found in a garbage can in a park near my childhood home. A 1970s-era magazine, *Cheri*, had on the cover a woman with golden hair, a silver dress, and glossy lips. This small collection of images I stashed away under the mattress like a forbidden treasure. I did not understand the pull, the desire, the resonance of the images of the nourishing mother body, but the ferocity with which I clung to them, despite the terrible, terrible taboo, suggests that in them was something I needed and for which I was willing to risk eternal damnation.

Walking through the mall is like walking through a modern-day temple complex, where we are stuck between Old Navy's nativity scene of appropriate pleasantness, and the 12-foot tall harlots of Victoria's Secret. We get stuck, pinned in the crucible of these conflicting images. The Western saints, and I used to read about these guys, would go so far as to throw themselves into thorn bushes to avoid temptation, their motto might have been thorniness over horniness. Victoria's Secret has other implications. though, as if the subtext is on loudspeakers—that this is an appropriate commodification of sexuality. You can come in here, purchase these items just as you would a pair of shoes next door. The female form is appropriate in this sense—don't question it. If you suppress the libido, it then can be siphoned off, controlled, appropriated. You can create enormous demand if you stoke the fire, then bind it. So here we have, framed for anyone's gaze, the entombed feminine form, like Hooters, The San Francisco 49ers cheerleaders, etc. This is the point where I realized that shopping is not so different from using pornography. The libido is one of the most virile commodities to be appropriated. It is all about power, and, once again, Fromm's (1956) theory of love offers a wonderfully accessible way of thinking about power and the self.

Power

The unique versatility in Fromm's theory provides a structure, a language and a conjunction where myth, sociology, psychology, and so many disparate disciplines, genres, theories, and ideas can intersect. Fromm (1950) asserts the greatest problem for people is the anxiety of "separation" we experience by being born into this world. He describes four ways that human cultures have attempted to overcome this separation. The first three are: orgiastic rites, artistic activity, and herd conformity. He says, however, that the fourth way, love, is the best way. Very carefully, he trains us to a different notion of what it means to love and be in a loving

relationship. At its heart he says that love is “the act of union with another while under the conditions of preserving one’s integrity” (Fromm, 1950, p. 19). When there is a relationship without integrity, the power dynamic involves corruption and colonization of another. Fromm uses the ideas of sadism and masochism to show how individuals can be dominated or dominant within any interaction. This simple set of ideas presents an incredibly useful way of critiquing the nature of power within oneself, within relationship, and within dynamics of society.

The controversial film *Lars and the Real Girl*, directed by Craig Gillespie (2007), offers a compelling vignette of sexuality, integrity, and community. In this film we can go back to that boy as he reaches into the garbage can to discover his sexuality and discover other possibilities. Lars is a socially awkward, shy, undeveloped man. He decides to customize and order his own goddess from the internet. The unfolding scenes witness Lars carrying around what is, essentially, a sex doll everywhere he goes. He should be ashamed, but really, those “puritan, world-negating” issues weren’t ones he was born with. The rest of us are ashamed for him, at first, as we see him doing things that scream, according to culture, as indecent, immoral, depraved, disgusting, perverted, sick, delusional, psychotic, and neurotic. Slowly at first, Gillespie shows in very subtle, gentle, and tender ways that Lars’ actions, intentions, fears, and desires are genuine, human, and innocent. When we realize that the retribution of the Lord is not going to sweep this polemic away, new possibilities emerge. Lars is looking for connection. The real magic of this film is captured in the ways that his family and, in ever-widening circles, members of the community start to take a pedagogic role in Lars’ journey. These scenes are stylized, but offer uncommon portraits of community serving the needs of its members in the most intimate ways. The community does not enable Lars, they allowed him to follow his own curriculum, allowed him the dignity of preserving his own integrity through his learning.

Once again I am left with two images: the community ritualizing Lars' curriculum on self, sexuality, and power in a beautiful, tender, subtle way, and the subsonic screaming, the hysterical sobs and moans coming from the naked images on the walls of Victoria's Secret. Once again, the mere absence of a formal, explicit curriculum does not equate to an absence of learning. Perhaps learning from the hidden curriculum of sexuality becomes magnified in our inner worlds. When schools ignore such undeniably human topics that sexuality represents, we can be left standing in a mall with a feeling of normality that masks confusion and raging inner conflicts.

Chapter X: Atonement with the Father

Parricide and Paternalism

*O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done,
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won,
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring;
But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead. (Whitman, 1865, p. 289)*

Ogre Father

This first stanza of Walt Whitman's (1865) lament referring to the death of President Abraham Lincoln in the poem, "Oh Captain! My Captain!" can be read as the death of an iconic father figure in our culture. Whitman was craving such a figure, he was looking for a "redeemer president" (Whitman, 1996/1855) who came out of the West. Here the lamented father is one, perhaps, of justice, integrity, wisdom, and generativity—a father or mentor for the whole society. Lincoln's "Gettysburg Address" has moved millions, embracing sadness, as Whitman does, and making sense out of so much reckless hate that permeated the Civil War and the enslavement of African Americans. How rare a scene is this, how rarely does such a person embody such positive notions of the father? What is infinitely more ubiquitous is what Campbell (1949) calls the *Ogre* aspect of the father, the father we must rail against, the enemy in our mother's bed, the tyrant, the titan, the paternal big brother—the *Man*. Campbell begins his description of the ninth stage of the hero's journey, "Atonement with the Father," with a long quote from an eighteenth

century preacher, Jonathan Edwards, whose words embody the infamous fire and brimstone sermon—“O Sinner! ... You hang by a slender Thread, with the Flames of Divine Wrath flashing about it ...” (Campbell, 1949, p. 127)—in order to demonstrate the forbidding sense often linked with father images. From the wrath of the divine father in the Old Testament to the angry fathers in every household to the paternalism of imperialism, the image of fathers as stern, oppressive, unyielding ogres has filled our imaginations. Darth Vader was, after all, a play on the phrase *Dark Father* according to George Lucas (Edwards, 2005). Campbell insists that other cultures and mythological heritages have not created such a one-sided monster out of the image of the father: “In most mythologies, the images of mercy and grace are rendered as vividly as those of justice and wrath, so that a balance is maintained, and the heart is buoyed rather than scourged along its way” (Campbell, 1949, p. 128). Yet the Old Testament image of the wrathful father and the tyrannical authority he represents persists in our culture, despite hundreds of years of dismantling: “The French gave patriarchy its first heavy blow in 1789” (Bly, 1996, p. 147). Scientists revolted against the “authority” of the church and began the mind/body dualism, while postmodern theories have finished the job of deconstructing the king’s narrative authority. Despite the obvious moral justification for overthrowing oppressive forms of social control, Bly (1996) suggests that we may have thrown the baby (authority) out with the bath water (patriarchal tyranny). With no “authority” or elder system either within one’s own psyche or within the culture, we have evolved into a sibling society—a group of vicious adolescent peers. “Adults regress towards adolescence; and adolescents—seeing that—have no desire to become adults. Few are able to imagine any genuine life coming from the vertical plane—tradition, religion, devotion” (Bly, 1996, p. viii).

It's as if we have three choices: parricide, paternalism, or no father at all. Like so many other ideas worth knowing, the discussion or rumination of the meaning of *father* from literal to symbolic, from the self to society is not really broached. Far from the great redeemer that Whitman longed for, the presence of the father in our culture is the thinly veiled paternalism of neoliberalism and felt as the incredibly oppressive policies of austerity. We might have been better off if he had "fallen cold and dead."

Entrepreneurs with No Authority

Bly's assertion that destruction of the elder systems of patriarchy started with the French Revolution is extended by Takaki (1979) who connects the precedent of parricide back to our forefathers. Takaki paints a picture wherein the first patriots left the king and their fathers in old Europe, stalking off to find their own way in the world. Takaki underscores the immense influence of puritan values and patriotism on the construction of a white American identity, and how virtue was fatally tied to ideas of civic duty and economic productivity. The War of Independence was as much about freedom from a corrupt and immoral authority symbolized by the king as it was about market freedom. Separation from England and "father" king also meant separation from traditions such as family and other kinds of community. Takaki describes this new moral code of market productivity as one of the psychological "bases of modern capitalism" (p. 70). Within the market revolution, "virtuous materialism" emerged as a result of the blending of the ideals of virtue, hard work (industriousness), and property ownership. Hard work and industry were morally correct habits that enabled the self-regulation of baser instincts, and any material benefits gained by such labor were virtuous. This ideology was set in a social and economic context where all traditions of family, community, and authority established within feudalism were completely absent. White men were seen as free agents engaging with each other

in an ethical competition to acquire as much wealth as possible. In this sense luxury and extravagance are not seen as vices but as badges of merit. In this worldview is the conflation of democracy and capitalism, virtue and acquisitiveness.

Similarly, Bly (1996) describes how “The spirit of acquisitive capitalism, or ‘limitless acquisition,’ as some call it, rose up energetically in Europe during the Middle Ages” (p. 148). Despite the efforts of the “humanist thinkers in the Renaissance” and “Catholic theologians” who, like Pope Francis today, warned about overwhelming greed and consumption, the Enlightenment thinkers, such as John Locke, Adam Smith, and Thomas Hobbes were busy establishing the virtues of property ownership. Citing an essay by Max Weber entitled, “The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,” Bly says that “He argued convincingly that the so-called Protestant revolution had a lot to do with giving permission to Christians to throw themselves wholesale into business” (p. 150). Protestant ideologies converted the spiritual and aesthetic mindset of Catholicism to serve business interests: “Puritan businessmen, in brief, directed towards the accumulation of wealth the ascetic lives that Catholic monks had developed through many earlier centuries directed toward the divine” (p. 151). Invoking a mythological lens, the founding ideologies of our country that rationalized competition and limitless consumption bring to mind the vision of Golding’s (1954) island of boys turned savage in *Lord of the Flies*. The lack of the elder system that marks our social dynamics in the macro sense is also played out on the level of personal relationships.

Men’s Movement

The loss of the father is evident in Mendocino, too, but there the loss is ruminated on. So many men tell stories about not knowing their father, of his absence, or abuse; they view their fathers in the ogre aspect. Many men tell stories, write poems, or rage to the rest of us a lifetime

of emotions, most often to fathers that have long since passed away. Then there are the fathers who tell harrowing stories of inheriting the ogre father psyche—of being abusive, abandoning their spouses, children, and families, and cutting themselves off emotionally and physically. This longing for the father is, in a way, the impetus of the “men’s movement,” also called the mythopoetic men’s movement. It is essentially about men trying to understand what the masculine means in a culture that only sees the ogre aspect of the father (Moore & Gillette, 1990). The movement also explores how the images and definitions of masculinity have been appropriated and narrowly defined in ways that might be best characterized in the rugged, aloof gravitas of the Western film heroes. Here, Bly says, “Instead of the inward struggles of conscience, the hours on one’s knees asking forgiveness, and the examination of the inner life, westerns provide suffering and blizzards” (Bly, 1996, p. 173). It is here, in this so-called mythopoetic movement, that a reconceptualization of my lived curriculum (Grumet, 1999/1980) becomes apparent.

A convergence in the genealogy of my mentors and life experiences revolves around the mythopoetic movement. I can see all of them sitting around a fire: Red Bear, Carl Jung, Robert Bly, Michael Meade, Joseph Campbell, Jiddu Krishnamurti, and recently the pantheon of mentors from Curriculum Studies: Bill Watkins, David Stovall, Ming Fang He, Bill Ayers, Bill Schubert, Peter Hilton, Isabel Nunez, and many others. Ironically, I did not see this genealogical nexus until writing this chapter. The threads go back to my failure to function in college and subsequent meeting with my therapist Red Bear, who himself was influenced by Jung, Campbell, and Bly among others. Under Red Bear’s mentorship I began reading books about psychology, spirituality, mythopoetics, and philosophy. I attended the “New Warriors” training, a weekend event where men attempt to recreate initiatory processes in order to move past personal barriers.

That experience was extended within integration groups that formed afterwards and met every week for a couple of years. I started attending “group” sessions with Red Bear where a small group of mentees tried to imagine and emulate what a “community” could be. We were in “mutual apprenticeships in which we [saw] ourselves as curricula for one another” (Schubert, 2009b, p. 62). I attended Red Bear’s first attempts to formulate his own retreats, which he dubbed *vision quests*. I recall, vividly now, how he described his own negative experience at another retreat and am convinced that he was an attendee of one of Bly’s and Meade’s earliest gatherings aimed at therapists and teachers. The origins of the mythopoetic movement is often credited to Bly’s (1990) book *Iron John*. Meade once spoke about the time Campbell came to witness the work of Meade, Bly, and James Hillman at a retreat in Mendocino. Meade’s overwhelming enthusiasm was quashed, though, because Campbell was highly critical of the event (M. Meade, personal communication, August, 2014). And so now, at the university, in the field of Curriculum Studies, I attempt to adopt the methodologies of various academic traditions to conduct a “disciplined inquiry” into the intersection of all these ideas, spurred by all of these mentors. The critical side of me sighs, as I see my life passions put into a category, the major players described, summarized, and pinned into boxes like an entomologist’s archivist. The *mythopoetic* section in the *Encyclopedia of Curriculum Studies* (Kridel, 2010) is brief. Nonetheless, I am grateful that my scholarly interests have a home in Curriculum Studies and that they are validated within the field. I will continue to make the argument that the hero’s journey of self-knowledge, including the significance of the meeting with the father, is craved, deeply, by elementary, adolescent, and high school students and remains a worthwhile pursuit.

Campbell

Campbell begins his discussion of mythological depictions of the father noting the familiar tyrannical connotations, but also the nurturing ones. The African God Edshu reflects this dual nature: “in him are contained and from him proceed the contradictions, good and evil, death and life, pain and pleasure, boons and deprivation ... he is the fountainhead of the pairs of opposites” (Campbell, 1949, p. 145). On a deeper level, Campbell asserts that our images of father as either good or evil are projections of an infant and adolescent mind, and, once we descend into a greater awareness, those distinctions disappear:

The ogre aspect of the father is a reflex of the victim’s own ego—derived from the sensational nursery scene that has been left behind, but projected before; and the fixating idolatry of that pedagogical nonthing is itself the fault that keeps one steeped in a sense of sin, sealing the potentially adult spirit from a better balanced, more realistic view of the father, and therewith of the world. (pp. 129-130)

Slaying the father does not mean, because of our audacity and superior strength or wit, that we simply replace him in a hierarchical way. We are confronting parts of ourselves. The father image is there to initiate us to a wiser state of being; the father represents a second birth.

Campbell (1949) describes an aboriginal Australian ritual involving circumcision that embodies the transformation of the father from ogre to nurturer. The fathers leave the village, dress up, and return to the village bearing drums and chanting to take the young boys away from their mothers, who apparently act afraid and exclaim to their sons that the “Great Father Snake is calling for their foreskins” (pp. 136-137). After a rich and dramatic event the boys are circumcised. However, the boys spend a month learning from the elder men while being nourished only by the blood of the same elders. The boys’ terror of the father is dramatized and

overcome, while the month-long meals of blood demonstrate “the self-giving aspect of the archetypal father” (p. 140). Although such accounts may seem extreme from the position of our own cultural lenses, Campbell says “it can be seen from a comparison of the figures of Australian ritual with those familiar to us from higher cultures, that the great themes, the ageless archetypes, and their operation upon the soul remain the same” (p. 142). Campbell includes in his comparative rituals those of the Catholic Sunday Mass, where each eligible member accepts Holy Communion, a rite that is symbolic of consuming the body and blood of Christ. The eighth grade graduation seems insignificant in comparison to the ritual of the Australian aboriginal youth. Unlike the rather tame ceremonies that mark the big moments in our modern culture, Campbell’s (1949) description of the pedagogic function of the father archetype presents opportunities for curriculum building that leads to powerful learning:

The problem of the hero going to meet the father is to open his soul beyond terror to such a degree that he will be ripe to understand how the sickening and insane tragedies of this vast and ruthless cosmos are completely validated in the majesty of Being. The hero transcends life with its peculiar blind spot and for a moment rises to a glimpse of the source. He beholds the face of the father, understands--and the two are atoned. (p. 147)

A Curriculum of Real Problems

The father is symbolic for curriculum that addresses real social problems within the context of pedagogic relationships. The father archetype is, perhaps, a kind of spiritual “reading of the world,” where:

The more radical the person is, the more fully he or she enters into reality so that, knowing it better, he or she can better transform it. This individual is not afraid to

confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into dialogue with them. (Freire, 1993, p. 21)

Similarly, the psychologist Carl Rogers (1961) asks:

Could we possibly permit students to come in contact with real issues? Our whole culture—through custom, through the law, through the efforts of labor unions and management, through the attitudes of parents and teachers—is deeply committed to keeping young people away from any touch with real problems. (p. 293)

Schooling might instead cultivate an understanding of self, of family, of mentoring, of embracing the realities of the world and confronting the injustices of the world, and of not accepting capitalism's claim that we all earn our plights based on our merit and efforts. Myth offers a curriculum more real than the modern myths we take in. One answer to the hero's meeting with the father from the field of Curriculum Studies is mentorship.

Mentorship

Each of the five years I have sat within the lodge in the woodlands of Mendocino, next to the stolid stone fireplace where a fire is kept stoked continuously throughout our “conversations,” I have witnessed, terrifyingly and intimately, the lived lives of other men. One man lost his 7-year-old daughter when he left her upstairs in the bathtub for a moment; she had suffered from seizures as an infant, but the previous one had taken place many months prior. Another man spoke of the loss of his wife and 6-year-old daughter, killed suddenly in a car accident. Yet another revealed to the group that his daughter of 21 had shot herself in the head 3 years before. There were stories of marriage, adultery, and divorce. Many men spent years in prison. One had been released recently after more than 26 years for killing his brother; another served time for robbery. Many spoke of life in gangs, of violence and drugs. Often the men who

spoke of violence revealed their own experiences of being abused, dominated, and abandoned. The sharing, pain, and healing occurred within a designed space that has a code and structure that mingles the mythological, the psychological, and the social. The stories that Meade told, and their charged images, metaphors, and symbols, can evoke responses quite readily. I respect the tone of these spaces—where the moral, intellectual, emotional, confrontational, and nurturing capacities of humans are stoked. *Retreat* is the wrong word—these events are hard work. You have to be alert, fearless, vulnerable, and present, and use an enormous amount of “disciplined inquiry” that taps into the feeling, intuiting, and sensing functions as well as the thinking one. Robert Bly offers a terse, rather unflattering depiction of the men’s movement and Meade’s retreats. Bly (1996) renames the mythopoetic movement the “Expressive Men’s Movement” and says,

So far it has not had much influence on the culture as a whole, and what it longs for most, initiation of young men into spiritual life and the mentoring of young men by older men, seems to be precisely what the culture is most unwilling to give. (p. 176)

He cites the “teachers” of the movement as Meade, Robert Moore, John Stokes, John Lee, and James Hillman, saying that “they often disagree with each other. No central point of view has been found, and [the movement] is basically a form of adult education outside the bounds of the university (p. 177). Speaking more directly to my experience, Bly adds,

The movement began primarily with white men, but recently, particularly in conferences organized by Michael Meade, it has been able to achieve week-long conferences in which half of the men are black and Hispanic, many from youth gangs ... the movement has many faults. (p. 177)

According to Meade, Bly's events are much more orderly, structured, and academic. Despite the brief descriptions of the mythopoetic movement I find in *Wikipedia*, and the unflattering appraisal by Robert Bly, I see the work in Mendocino as a valuable model to inform and challenge teaching and learning in schools.

On the retreats, the race, class, and intergenerational fights are stoked. This is one of the major themes and dynamics—this conversation between the young men and the old men in the room. Shouting and rage usually ensues, often mixed in with sadness and weeping. The young men confront the elders for not having more courage, for not being more “real” with our own lives and with them. The assault on the white, middle-class, men is unequivocal. Our privilege is responded to; we are called-out. The young men say they are craving mentorship and instruction ... but they don't want us to tell them what to do; they want us to embody more meaningful ways of being in the world (van Manen, 1986). Most of the men are critical of school and society in general. They see schools as cages of domestication built for them. That's what high schools were for originally--to keep the youth off the streets, and to externally define what it means to be human: “This form of institutional dependence can potentially freeze and deaden all human activity” (Spring, 1972, p. 152). The young men in Mendocino are not interested in becoming dependent. They want economic and social justice, but also beauty, passion, creativity, community, and spirituality. They are craving older men who are fighting back and resisting oppressive structures, but also ones who are living the artistic design of lived lives. Meade (1993) says that when one generation does not mentor and initiate the younger one then things go wrong:

The generation, the community, and the culture-at-large are the next family for the individual. However, when people aren't initiated into specific relationships within the

larger culture, they don't feel as responsible for the conditions that follow ... One of the problems today is the increasing alienation of young people during and after periods of ordeal, which is intensified because there are generation gaps without generation bridges. When there is no community waiting to welcome, acknowledge, and close the life breaks of youth, the separations and ordeals tend to continue. (p. 194)

The old Russian folk tale that begins with the firebird dropping a feather before the feet of the hero, as mentioned in Chapter 2, symbolizes the adolescent need for an engaging curriculum, a fire initiation, according to Meade, when a young person embarks on a curriculum based on their own, inner longings: "initiation by fire attempts to open paths to beauty through the risk of increased passions" (Meade, 1993). Meade says that society is responsible for containing and transmuting the passions and energy of adolescent males. It is a time that:

Opens his imaginal life into dreams and visions of flying and falling. He heats up biologically, emotional and spiritual flames sear him from inside. He is driven to seek an outer experience that will match his inner heat and turmoil. If he doesn't get connected to the mysteries, to the warmth and beauty at the heart of the culture, he may burn with rage and injustice, or turn cold with resentment and depression. (p. 222)

Although he is not officially certified to teach young people in a public school classroom, Meade's ideas have carried more validity to me than much of what I have learned in my theory and methodology courses for teaching in schools.

Fire initiations also have to do, Meade (1993) says, with discovering one's "own genius" (p. 226). Meade suggests that each person's genius represents their unique gifts and life purpose. He says there are two parts to finding our genius—we need to see it in ourselves, and we must be seen by a mentor (p. 226).

Schubert (1992) describes 10 attributes that occur within meaningful mentoring relationships, many of which address the concerns that the young men in Mendocino raise. Among them are: “Giving genuine attention,” “inspiring a vision,” “being morally committed,” “having religious (spiritual, soulful) conviction,” “exercising humility,” and “living on in others” (Schubert, 1992, p. 66). In discussing what counts as “significant learning” in therapy, Rogers (1961) describes several elements including “empathic understanding,” “facing a real problem,” “unconditional positive regard,” and “congruence” that could apply to any pedagogic relationship (pp. 282-284).

Perhaps the most succinct, yet penetrating, insight I have encountered about the core relationship between teachers and students came from a story that Schubert shared with me about the time he asked his own father (a long time coach, teacher and school administrator) for advice as a teacher. Schubert’s father had replied with two powerful ideas. The first was to “get to know their language,” by which he meant culture, self, genius, and interests, perhaps. His second comment was to “teach them to feel the hurt within the child” (Schubert, 1991, p. 5). The second idea, particularly, resonates with what I’ve read and experienced through therapy, participation in the men’s movement, and my own teaching experiences. Echoing this, Meade has often said in stories and people’s lives that, “the treasure (gifts) are right next to the wounds” (M. Meade, personal communication, 2014). Van Manen (1986) writes eloquently about the enormous impact that a teacher’s relationship with a student can have. Arguing for the student-centered curriculum, Smith, Stanley and Shores (1950) state that “children have capacities, needs, interests, and purposes of their own, which can be ignored only at the risk of retarding the development of intelligent and healthy personalities” (p. 158).

Wisdom of Sadness

Out of all the mythological fathers, tyrants, and kings that Campbell could have chosen to make his final point about the meeting with the father, he chose an image of a weeping god, Viracocha. He says that the most important aspect of this image of the father is his tears—which convey a sense of compassion in his paradoxical role as provider and destroyer. In a giant stretch of the imagination, Viracocha reminds me of the recent film *Inside Out*, by directors Pete Docter and Ronnie del Carmen (2015). In the film, which is essentially a psychological sketch of the inner world with different characters representing different parts of a person’s psyche, the main character “Joy” finds redemption only when she works in tandem with the character “Sadness.” Perhaps the only way to embrace and hold contradictions, to understand the reckless hate in the world, is with tears. In a strange way, the face of Viracocha also reminds me of Lincoln, who was known to be deeply interred in the inner world and is believed to have suffered from depression or melancholia. In an article from *Rolling Stone*, an assessment of Lincoln is eerily applicable to the discussion in this chapter:

Viewing Lincoln through the lens of his melancholy ... he was always willing to look at the full truth of a situation, assessing both what could be known and what remained in doubt. When faced with uncertainty he had the patience, endurance, and vigor to stay in that place of tension, and the courage to be alone. (Shenk, 2005)

I have looked for a “father figure” in my own biological father, in the faces of iconic characters and heroes from the novels and movies that I’ve seen, in the priests and Church lore that I grew up with, in teachers from kindergarten to the university, in my therapist and in mentors of all kinds. Myth says, once again, that when we wait for that “redeemer president,” we are looking for something on the inside—the king is within. In looking at my path along

Campbell's trajectory, I feel as if this stage of the journey is still beyond my grasp. I have known melancholy and sadness, but those of a very young man just beginning to make his familiar epistemologies strange through critical reflection, of which this dissertation is a part. I need to engage in outer struggles, commit my scholarly work to the struggle against the myriad social injustices that so many other fathers, mentors, mothers, and pedagogues have been fighting, before I can emulate the level of wisdom and leadership embodied by Lincoln and Virachou.

Chapter XI: Apotheosis

Rockin' in the Free World

For the hero who “races to the top” of Campbell’s climax stage and reaches the “apotheosis” of his or her educational journey, the pedagogical and curricular implications are stated in no uncertain terms: “Like the Buddha himself, this godlike being is a pattern of the divine state to which the human hero attains who has gone beyond the last terrors of ignorance” (Campbell, 1949, pp. 150-151). Unlike the deceptive and paternal claim of the dominant discourse of educational policy that no *child* will be left behind, the hopeful message attached to Campbell’s curriculum of the hero reassures us, “This is the release potential within us all, and which anyone can attain” (p. 151). For Campbell, the pinnacle achievement of the hero is manifested in three wonders which are concerned with transcendent levels of awareness about the non-duality of existence. The first two wonders convey that all opposites are illusory, including the non-dualities of male and female, and time and eternity, while the third wonder is simply the elegant way that the two are symbolical of each other through the image of the bisexual god (Campbell, 1949). It is interesting to consider how the ultimate climax for the heroes in many myths is viewed as increased epistemological and ontological consciousness through a curriculum of self-study. Campbell offers a few insights attached to the “wonders” that deserve closer attention.

The Bisexual God

Campbell (1949) notes the recurrence of the images of bisexual gods in Chinese, Judaic, Japanese, Zuni, Christian, African, Greek, and many other mythologies. The symbolic meaning in the androgynous divinities represents the wholeness of being before the phenomenality of dualities and opposites came about, when the masculine and feminine were first split into

different parts. Campbell uses one example from Australian, aboriginal cultures to describe a ritual where young men initiates, after undergoing a separate ritual with the fathers described in the last chapter, now receive a cut in the underside of their penises creating the “penis womb. It is a symbolic male vagina. The hero has become, by virtue of the ceremonial, more than man” (p. 154). Campbell inserts a kind of cautionary tale about the apotheosis, however, warning that identification with the father aspect of a divinity, in some cultures, creates an exclusive group when we consider the monotheistic religions of mass society:

The world is full of the resultant mutually contending bands: totem-, flag-, and party-worshippers. Even the so-called Christian nations—which are supposed to be following a “World” Redeemer—are better known to history for their colonial barbarity and internecine strife than for any practical display of that unconditioned love, synonymous with the effective conquest of ego, ego’s world (acquisitive society), and ego’s tribal god. (pp. 156-157)

The more expansive mythologies appear to embrace a more inclusive reach as if their “in-group” was the global community. Campbell (1949) says that a better example of a religion that preaches “universal love” might look at the older stories of the Buddha, who teaches that the divine, “the mighty Bodhisattva, Boundless Love, includes, regards, and dwells within (without exception) every sentient being” (p. 160). It is likely that Campbell made these kinds of broad claims and distinctions as a way to critique the “myths” of his own Western culture instead of making a definitive theological argument about Christianity versus Buddhism. Despite his criticism of Christianity, Campbell seems to view the secular appropriation of religious zealotry as more problematic, “The World Savior’s cross, in spite of the behavior of its professed priests, is a vastly more democratic symbol than the local flag” (Campbell, 1949, 159).

Smith et al. (1950) title a chapter in their curriculum book “The Source of Authority in Curriculum Building.” In it they consider Divine Will, Eternal Truth, and Science before claiming the Democratic Ideal as both the moral and legal authority in selecting curriculum (p. 150). They see a moral parallel between religion and democracy, “Fortunately, for the most part, the central ethical cores of the majority of religious traditions present in America are, by the statement of their own adherents, largely compatible with the central ethical conception of democracy” (p. 150).

Perhaps in a way to exemplify the wonder of collapsing pairs of opposites, distinctions, boundaries, and compartmentalizations, Campbell shows how myth’s language of symbols catches us in a lie when we speak of separation of church and state. Considering how spirituality might “operationalize” the ideas or phenomena of freedom and democracy might be a way to bridge the inner and outer worlds so that students could see their inner subjectivities have real connections in our world.

The Present Moment

The second wonder is nothing less than the annihilation of the distinction between time and eternity. Many high school students might find this useful during their eight periods of obligation attending a state-mandated curriculum. For the hero to stand upon the threshold of awareness “represents a realization that the distinction between eternity and time is only apparent—made, perforce, by the rational mind, but dissolved in the perfect knowledge of the mind that has transcended the pairs of opposites” (Campbell, 1949, p. 152). Campbell notes how the Bodhisattva myth portrays this apex dynamic. The future Buddha confronts his ultimate nemesis, a creature symbolic of desire, hostility and delusion. The hero’s triumph is when he or she *lets go*, so to speak, of the “will to live according to the normal motives of desire and

hostility, in a delusory ambient of phenomenal causes, ends, and means” (pp. 163-164). He says of this particular legend that “The vivid personifications prepare the intellect for the doctrine of the interdependence of the inner and outer worlds” (p. 164). Campbell also makes a strong comparison between the processes of mythological and psychological thinking in mass society, linking the former to psychoanalysis. He does, however, draw a definite distinction between psychological aims and spiritual ones:

Psychoanalysis is a technique to cure excessively suffering individuals of the unconsciously misdirected desires and hostilities that weave around them their private webs of unreal terrors and ambivalent attractions; the patient released from these finds himself able to participate with comparative satisfaction in the more realistic fears, hostilities, erotic and religious practices, business enterprises, wars, pastimes, and household tasks offered to him by his particular culture. But for the one who has deliberately undertaken the difficult and dangerous journey beyond the village compound, these interests, too, are to be regarded as based on error. Therefore the aim of the religious teaching is not to cure the individual back again to the general delusion, but to detach him from delusion altogether; and this not by readjusting the desire (eros) and hostility (thanatos)—for that would only originate a new context of delusion—but by extinguishing the impulses to the very root. (pp. 164-165)

The difference between psychotherapy and the uses of myth and initiation is that psychotherapy gets us functioning again (a pill can now do that as well), but the “religious” route wants us to go beyond the functioning ego world altogether. Myth imagines possibilities for us—human learning is much more than job preparation. This passage might be read with elation and vindication for all of those who live quiet lives of desperation, or who have longed for something

more than functioning in the ego culture. Perhaps, instead of a maze, we can use the image of the normative bell curve, which puts its faith in normality and sameness as it encircles its herd of data points. Our job is to cross the threshold and become outliers, so we can move back and forth, but also so we can transcend the normative curve.

Another salient aspect of the second wonder described by Campbell (1949) is the way in which the Japanese tea ritual emulates higher states of awareness. It's as if the ritual, as a designed space, attempts to create the moment of the hero's apotheosis. The teahouse "is an ephemeral structure built to enclose a moment of poetic intuition" (p. 168). The value of the spiritual infused with the aesthetic became an ordering principle for other parts of Japanese culture:

The great tea masters were concerned to make of the divine wonder an experienced moment; then out of the teahouse the influence was carried into the home; and out of the home distilled in the nation ... [where] existence to the slightest detail was a conscious expression of eternity, the landscape itself a shrine ... the sermon of the inanimate. (pp. 168-169)

In many ways this description captures the meaning of the term "present moment," the idea that we are focused on the experience of the here and now. Van Manen (1986) alludes to this quality when he forces us to look at the power and subtlety of every simple interaction in the classroom. Sir Ken Robinson (2010) says that we are engaged in the aesthetic when, "our senses are operating at their peak ... in the present moment." Articulated in these ways, it is possible to see how teachers can create learning environments that embody aesthetic sensibilities.

I've had my relative revelations, but to claim the kind of knowledge that Campbell lays out in this climax stage of the hero's journey would be narcissistic and would miss the whole

point: Such far-reaching ideas can be used to inspire us, spur us to imagine possibilities, see ourselves and our students in other ways, and consider the depths of what curriculum theorizing can mean.

Chapter XII: The Ultimate Boon

Humor is the Surest Sign of the Presence of God.

One scene from the film *Caddyshack*, directed by Harold Ramis (1980), shows the character played by Bill Murray talking to a young caddy, telling him about the time he (Murray) caddied for The Dalai Lama. Murray's character says that although the Dalai Lama did not tip him, he said he would receive, on his deathbed, "total enlightenment." The gift that Murray's character would humorously assume is similar to what Campbell (1949) says is the "boon" the hero receives after his quest: "The agony of breaking through personal limitations is the agony of spiritual growth. Art, literature, myth and cult, philosophy, and ascetic disciplines are instruments to help the individual past his limiting horizons into spheres of ever-expanding realization" (Campbell, 1949, p. 190).

This idea of moving past the limits of our horizons leads to a single inscrutable mystery: the power that constructs the atom and controls the orbits of the stars. That font of life is the core of the individual, and within himself he will find it—if he can tear the coverings away. (Campbell, 1949, p. 191)

The ultimate boon is the ability to enter the "void" of higher awareness and realizations, of total enlightenment, and once again Campbell describes this state of being as a part of the hero's core. This resonates with the original ideas behind what's been referred to throughout the decades as the "core" curriculum. Campbell continues: "What the hero seeks through his intercourse with them [gods and goddesses] is therefore not finally themselves, but their grace, i.e., the power of their sustaining substance" (p. 181). This is all a kind of extension, and explanation of the implications for reaching the apotheosis. Campbell repeats the ideas of letting go of "ego" and

finding “all the forces of the unconscious” at our side. Here is the “supernatural aid” revealed, finally, to be a part of ourselves.

Campbell (1949) also makes an important distinction in this chapter about the role of humor in the hero’s quest. He implies that myths often do not take themselves too seriously, to make sure that people don’t become attached to the literal. There is a sophisticated humor to myths:

Humor is the touchstone of the truly mythological as distinct from the more literal-minded and sentimental theological mood. The gods as icons are not ends in themselves. Their entertaining myths transport the mind and spirit, not up to, but past them, into the yonder void; from which perspective the more heavily freighted theological dogmas then appear to have been only pedagogical lures: their function, to cart the unadroit intellect away from its concrete clutter of facts and events to a comparatively rarefied zone, where, as a final boon, all existence—whether heavenly, earthly, or infernal—may at last be seen transmuted into the semblance of a lightly passing, recurrent, mere childhood dream of bliss and fright. (pp. 180-181)

The ultimate boon can be seen as a visit and an insight from the trickster. Like the scarecrow in *The Wizard of Oz* who later realizes that the entire quest was, in a way, folly, because what he sought was inside all along. Like the *Zorba the Greek*, who laughs when his special project, the important work he was doing, building a cable car, completely fails, the ability to laugh, see the absurdity and compassionate humor in it all, is the hero’s reward.

At first glance, Orwell’s (1977) dystopian novel *1984* does not seem like it could be considered a comedy. The novel describes a totalitarian society where every aspect of life is controlled and surveilled, and characters are oppressed ideologically, psychologically, and

physically. Many of the themes are relevant today in critiquing neoliberal policies. Despite the ominous tone, and regardless of how well it describes present reality in our social world, a short essay by John Crowley (2013), “The Future as Parable,” helped me to get “past the forms” that I cling to, namely the dystopian critiques of modern, mass society which this entire dissertation is really about, and to see the potential for creative struggle in oppression. Crowley suggests that Orwell’s inspiration for the novel came from the political writings of James Burnham, who predicted that a great “managerial class” of technocrats would rule over the majority. Crowley says that *1984* should be read as a parable. The control of people in the novel is so brazen, so complete, that it is absurd! And the real import is for the story to trouble us, the way that parables do, by sparking our imagination. The curriculum questions are no different. The idea is for each pedagogue to enter into a creative struggle.

At the end of the retreats in Mendocino, the final meeting is usually a hilarious affair. One time one of the men, a storyteller by trade, dressed up as the hag aspect of the goddess from the story we listened to during the week. He then started to roast the entire event, singling out several momentous episodes that, at the time, were quite serious and painful, but were now ensconced in laughter. To be sure, there was something healing and “right” about us not taking it all so seriously. Meade is charismatic for many reasons and his accessibility is one of them, but even more so is his humor—dry, deadpan, and used so skillfully as a pedagogical tool throughout the retreats. Going back to humor ... it needs to be studied ruthlessly. I think that humor is my saving grace in looking at my own life path in regards to these 17 stages—I solidly positioned myself in stage two, almost a hundred pages ago.

Chapter XIII: The Return

When You Know Too Much

Campbell's (1949) monomyth does not simply end just after the climax of the hero's journey. In fact, there are several different paths of return that the hero can take. Some refuse to return and must be kicked out of heaven; others leave on good terms; and many flee the realm of the divine, fighting for their lives. These flights are often comical and sensational; yet, there is some danger here and the message seems to be that you can't play around with the supernatural powers of the unconscious:

The magic objects tossed behind by the panic-ridden hero—protective interpretations, principles, symbols, rationalizations, anything—delay and absorb the power of the started Hound of Heaven, permitting the adventurer to come back into his fold safe and with perhaps a boon. (p. 203)

It becomes clear that the transition from a heightened state of awareness back to the waking world is something to be taken seriously. Campbell devotes four brief chapters, 12 through 15, describing the ways that myths portray the hero's "return" back into the waking world. Chapter 12: "Refusal of the Return," Chapter 13: "The Magic Flight", and Chapter 14: "Rescue from Without" describe different outcomes for heroes in myths. In Chapter 15: "Crossing the Return Threshold," Campbell brings the reader to the moment, after the chases, where the hero attempts to step back into the village or community of his or her origin.

If epistemologies and ontologies could be considered other "worlds," then the entire symbolic language of the myth and the hero's journey might make more sense. "The realm of the gods is a forgotten dimension of the world we know. And the exploration of that dimension, either willingly or unwillingly, is the whole sense of the deed of the hero" (Campbell, 1949, p.

217). In “Crossing the Return Threshold,” Campbell notes, “There must always remain, however, from the standpoint of normal waking consciousness, a certain baffling inconsistency between the wisdom brought forth from the deep, and the prudence usually found to be effective in the light world” (p. 217). If the transition were only a momentary baffling and bewilderment, what of those who would test as shaman, if that were an official occupation designated within vocational aptitude tests? What of that poor, nameless character who stumbles out of Plato’s cave, who received “enlightenment” and returns to bestow this gift only to be murdered by his own people still in chains? What of the unfinished, uninitiated boy who cannot find a place in suburban herd/hive society and who is chased by a mob back to his home in Tim Burton’s (1990) *Edward Scissorhands*? What of Mary Shelley’s (1963) *Frankenstein*? What of Fyodor Dostoyevsky’s (1950) Jesus in *The Brothers Karamazov*, who comes back and is slain? What of the stranger who comes home to a strange land and is killed in Robert Heinlein’s (1961) novel? Perhaps those bloody deaths are better than bleached, sanitized domination at the hands of Nurse Ratchet in *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* (Kesey, 1962).

. What may be far more insidious and dangerous to those who cultivate their interior world are the parts within ourselves who deny, decry, and devalue our own insights. Returning heroes are more likely to face the literal, utilitarian rationalizations of their community than torches and pitchforks: “The poet and the prophet can discover themselves playing the idiot before a jury of sober eyes” (Campbell, 1949, p. 217).

Campbell (1949) claims that the hero’s reception by mass society is ironic because myth’s chosen occupation for him or her is that of pedagogue, or mystagogue:

How teach again, however, what has been taught correctly and incorrectly learned a thousand thousand times, throughout the millenniums of mankind’s prudent folly? That is

the hero's ultimate difficult task. How render back into light-world language the speech-defying pronouncements of the dark? (p. 218)

Many teachers who entered the profession did so because of a sense of calling, and they are leaving the field due to market-based reforms that restrict creativity and reduce the curriculum to extremely narrow, decontextualized skills. It is funny to think of the successful completion of the 17 stages of the hero's journey as the final teacher certification requirement—if only it were rigorous enough.

Instead, the latest “new and improved,” standardized, and nationally available educational product, the pre-service teacher performance assessment (TPA) has been adopted by over 20 states so far. My experience with the tasks is a result of having to provide an overview of them for an online foundations course I taught in California, where the tasks were first developed. Teachers are assessed for their readiness to teach based on four different “tasks” that measure multiple criteria, established in the Teaching Performance Expectations (TPEs). Once again, the phenomena of teaching and learning are being processed through simplification, reduction, standardization, and replication. Apart from their formulaic, rigid, and procedural structure, the most striking feature of the tasks I have found is the rather absolutist and imperious tone they project when one reads them, as if they represented the final word on what good teaching is, down to the most minute procedural detail. We now have a model of strict surveillance to accompany mass production. I think that pre-service teachers may find the unquestionable, high-stakes, technocratic language of certainty to be more intimidating than calls to “render back into light-world language the speech-defying pronouncements of the dark” (Campbell, 1949, p. 218). With what sober eyes will this dissertation topic, methodology, and

analysis be met outside the mentorship of my committee, or even of my own advisor? Speech-defying pronouncements are not generalizable.

Chapter XIV: Master of Two Worlds/ Freedom to Live

Epistemologies of Being

In the sixteenth stage, “Master of Two Worlds,” Campbell highlights the hero’s ability to navigate the literal and symbolical worlds and uses the image of the transfiguration of Christ to show the “mystery of the ready transit” (Campbell, 1949, p. 229). In Chapter 17, “Freedom to Live,” Campbell leaves us with a final insight: “The hero is the champion of things becoming, not of things become, because he *is*” (p. 243). The argument can be made that there is a need for such heroes—for champions of moral, spiritual, creative, generative, and just plain human qualities—given the current climate of late capitalism and the threat of biological extinction on the horizon. Noah De Lissovoy (2015) grapples with these social problems, linking them to schooling problems. Sixty-five years earlier Smith, Stanley and Shores (1950) published a volume that was based, in part, on the rationale that society was at a crossroads as well, and that we desperately needed a new compass. Both books are critical of the status quo. Both books describe what is at stake: the spaces of public education, the spaces of social interaction, and the spaces within each inner subjectivity. Both books call for a moral, human, democratic solution. These texts are related; they lay along the critical reconstruction continuum. They are part of the call for resistance. Seen from a greater distance, they represent a call for change and action that 60 years later is more urgent, more vital. The historical connection between the voices in these texts is salient because casting our present dilemma within a larger, longer struggle may provide insights into breaking out of the cycle of opposition. We need to try something new.

These two books intersect on a critical theme that echoes the function of myth: They are both about emancipation. Smith et al. (1950) want to create conditions for learning based on unfettered, critical, meaningful awareness. De Lissovoy (2015) likewise argues for an emancipated self and commons. One book is on curriculum theory, the other on critical

philosophy; yet they speak to each other, grappling with the same abolition of the human. Smith et al. could be seen as a cautionary tale, while De Lissovoy picks up where they left off and extends it. Running alongside each book are other “stories”: those of how neoliberal policies are affecting individuals and society.

On a deeper level, each text is trying to grapple with the metaphysical, the spiritual. We have all kinds of euphemisms for the black box—the psyche, the personality, the inner world, spirit, soul, self, etc. Both of these texts are saying that the heart of education needs to address these inner landscapes, and that our emancipation needs to start there. Mythology has the same message—it tells about the running of a race that each human must undergo to reach balance within. Perhaps mythology, mythopoetics, and initiation can be a bridge for curriculum studies by allowing the language of spirit and soul into our academic discourse. This is why so many scholars and researchers of color and from non-Western traditions are urging us to let go of our addiction to Western epistemologies.

Smith, Stanley, and Shores

Fundamentals of Curriculum Development (Smith, et al., 1950) is classic curriculum book, a synoptic text, and a mid-20th century portrait of the field and its relationship to the broader context of society. In keeping with the genre, it was organized around traditional discussions of purposes, objectives, subject matter selection, curriculum organization, and criteria and evaluation for all of these elements. Beyond these issues of content and structure three items stand out for this text: It dared to be theoretical, making it a pioneer of curriculum theory in general; it looked at the implication curriculum had for the learner’s personality or self; and it argued for the moral necessity of curriculum as social reconstruction. Put another way,

Smith et al. (1950) argued that in times of cultural upheaval curriculum needs to maintain the democratic ideal to preserve the integrity of society and its citizens.

We need, Smith, et al. (1950) argued, a “social diagnosis” for curriculum development in terms of the economic system, social values, family culture, and more (p. 2). Society was in a time of fluctuation wrought by changes in science, technology, and the economy. These dynamics led to the creation of mass society, which has altered our way of being together. It was not enough to speak in abstractions of creating good citizens, or getting back to fundamentals, because, “a period of profound cultural transformation will upset the curriculum and require that it be reconstructed with respect to purpose, content, method of instruction, and means of evaluation” (p. 22). They argue for an education that addresses the social needs of its time, based on the democratic ideal. It is an argument for humanism, for democracy, for critical reconstruction. In the words of a later review, the book defines “a curriculum orientation that is allied with the social reconstructionist perspective of experientialism ... Smith, Stanley, and Shores argue for critical analysis of a curriculum that focuses on social problems” (Schubert, Lopez Schubert, Thomas, & Carroll, 2002, pp. 116-117). Over six decades later, its message is still loud and clear advocacy for social justice. This book established a case for the turn inward to look at the impact of the curriculum on the self in the face of cultural change, particularly the impact of global economic forces on our social relations.

Rise of Corporations

Smith et al. (1950) devote special attention to the need for a critical curriculum of the economy given that the economic context cannot be separated from political, social, and moral issues. They point out how the free market system that was established in our country’s early history had undergone substantial changes: the decline of individual enterprise, the separation of

ownership and control of productive property, the decline of individual initiative, and the perversion of the free market (p. 68) This call for the examination of a changing capitalistic system as a central feature of public school curricula was made at the height of the McCarthy era (Schubert, Lopez Schubert, Thomas, & Carroll, 2002, pp. 108). Primary among these changes was the decline of individual ownership and the rise of corporations and the centralization of power. Speaking about rise of corporate influence, Smith et al. (1950) make an observation that seems eerily predictive of contemporary critiques of political funding and influence: “there are those who have warned that the continued growth of such great concerns may end with an economic organism powerful enough to supersede the political state” (p. 65). Another key change was the decline of individual initiative. Corporate America needed compliant, collaborative workers in 1950.

When the dynamics of the economic and political process can affect the public in such profound ways as mass unemployment and the “human suffering” that follows from economic depressions (Smith et al., 1950, p. 78), then the public needs to become aware informed, and educated in order to navigate the system. Citizens need to critique the way in which freedoms are allocated or suppressed given “the impersonal, organizational relations in the economy” (p. 82). The public needs to be literate, informed, and critical of the economic life of country and globe—not trained as obedient, marketable workers who retain a simplistic, idealized notion of capitalism.

American ideologies of free enterprise, individualism, hard work, and appeals to the mom-and-pop shops set within an agrarian society have long been used to justify oppressive policies—even as 90% of the wealth is owned by 1% of the people. The appropriation of democratic principles has been going on for a long time: “apologists for the corporate system are

[still] ‘cashing in on’ the theoretical framework of the old laissez faire system, which it is displacing. This results in all kinds of intellectual confusions and conflicts in the public mind” (Smith et al., 1950, p. 77).

Mass Society

The critique of mass society has been well established in both popular and academic mediums. Citizens and students are seen as cogs in a wheel. Smith et al. (1950) describe a society and educational system that are in Ford factory production mode. In school as in industry, “the student goes through the educational programs by being exposed to this fragment of knowledge here and that one there until he accumulates the units required for graduation” (p. 30).

The compartmentalization of our social lives into work/pleasure routines and normative identities has made us more familiar with the others in a particular subgroup than with any sense of public or familial community or solidarity (Smith, et al., 1950, p. 35). The proliferation of smartphones, Facebook, Twitter, and all sorts of social media, it could be argued, is having a similar effect. Smith et al. (1950) anticipate Fromm’s (1956) critique of the work/pleasure routine:

Man becomes a “nine to fiver,” he is part of the labor force, or the bureaucratic force of clerks and managers. He has little initiative, his tasks are prescribed by the organization of the work; there is even little difference between those high up on the ladder and those on the bottom. They all perform tasks prescribed by the whole structure of the organization, at a proscribed speed, and in a proscribed manner. Even the feelings are proscribed: cheerfulness, tolerance, reliability, ambition, and an ability to get along with everybody without friction. Fun is routinized in a similar, although not quite so drastic

ways. Books are selected by the book clubs, movies by the film and theater owners and the advertising slogans paid for by them; the rest is also uniform: the Sunday ride in the car, the television session, the card game, the social parties. From birth to death, from Monday to Monday, from morning to evening—all activities are routinized, and prefabricated. How should a man caught in this net of routine not forget he is a man, a unique individual, one who is given only this one chance of living, with hopes and disappointments, with sorrow and fear, with the longing for love and the dread of the nothing and of separateness? (Fromm, 1956, p. 16)

The disorientation of mass society must affect people to the extent that it separates them from their subjectivity. Curriculum should serve to ground people, to help them make sense out of their circumstances, and to help people reorient, recreate, and reengineer their lives.

The Heart of Reconstruction is the Ability to Imagine Possibilities

Most likely due to the forces in society that compartmentalized and standardized our lives as workers and consumers, the most poignant aspect of Smith et al.'s (1950) vision of what it means to educate human beings is their insistence on the creative self-determination of individuals. Their discussion of the social function of education broadly asserts that education needs to go beyond mere training, it should demonstrate a “democratic faith in the potentialities of the common man” (p. 175). They argue that “the fundamental principle of the democratic ethic is that the locus of supreme moral worth is to be found not in social institutions nor in an abstract universal humanity, but in concrete human beings” (p. 181). The function of education is reconstruction—the cultivation of fully aware; morally, intellectually, aesthetically “whole” persons to participate in an evolving democratic society.

Inconsistency and contradictory principles lead to human suffering and social tensions (Smith et al., 1950, p. 267). Curriculum workers need to look at the “logical relationships” among educational objectives. Smith et al. assert that within the progressive notion of a “core” curriculum it is “not enough” to master traditional subject matter content, to follow their own interests, or to consider social “problems” and “trends,” even if done critically: “youth must be encouraged to project their thinking into the future, to conceive the kind of social ends and relationships it is possible to build within the bounds of basic social trends” (p. 471). In the end, Smith et al. argue for the dignity of citizens and students, and for their power to imagine possibilities for their society, their values, their being, and their future.

Noah De Lissovoy

Smith et al. (1950) were addressing a more abstract, general threat: special interests, corporate power, elitism, and classism, as well as the danger of apathy and settling for the status quo. Curriculum and schooling were to be used as tools or roadmaps to further the democratic ideal, a secular moral code that represented the “best” attempt at allowing humanity to exist and grow. They regarded the individual as a being with dignity. What kind of society would they have predicted to exist, 65 years later, based on their portrait of curriculum and culture in 1950? Did the call for a student-centered core curriculum focused on social issues and the democratic ideal become realized through the tireless work of curriculum workers as statesmen? Has our education system helped to reorient the population to the dramatic changing times brought on by science and technology? Do we have teachers and students making the development of full human beings the center of education for the benefit of society? Are we prepared not only to critique, but to act on our democratic principles? Where is the dignity of the learner, the citizen?

What has become of these insightful, radical, bold calls for social justice curriculum and critical pedagogy—before those terms even came into being?

As in a scene from some science fiction thriller, De Lissovoy (2015) steps in and quashes the images of a “triumphant new society” (p. 1). It’s as if we have entered one of Huxley’s or Orwell’s dystopian futures. The year is now 2015; De Lissovoy states, “Globally, power undertakes a process of dispossession and de-stabilization that leaves more and more people in the margins” (p. 1). Alongside a still viable nuclear threat, we are at the cusp of environmental disaster and extinction, while existing in a state of constant warfare across the globe. In schools we are seeing the systematic privatization of education. There is a national culture of accountability enforced by a regimen of high-stakes testing, zero-tolerance behavior management, scripted curricula and instruction. The purposes of education are framed as the preparation of young people from pre-kindergarten onwards to “compete” in the global economy. We see the achievement gap addressed simplistically as merely a matter of will-power untouched by socio-economic injustice by those who focus instead on school-to-prison pipeline, teacher denigration, and destruction of unions, etc. In short, Smith et al.’s (1950) dire warnings about the power of special interests, of the rise of corporations and indoctrination of the public have gone unheeded.

What happened? We have seen the enemy, De Lissovoy (2015) argues, and it is neoliberalism. It is the logical conclusion of a changing capitalism—a culture of market fundamentalism that is built upon the secular moral code of austerity. Through policies of accountability and punishment, neoliberalism manifests its moral creed of austerity—the lived experience of these policies is violation and domination. It’s as if neoliberals read and used *Fundamentals of Curriculum Development* as a template to insert their own vision, story, and

ideology—instead of the democratic ideal, the market ideal of capitalism is being valorized. Instead of being the sites for liberation, schools are now places where minds, bodies, and souls are indoctrinated into the marketization of personalities, intelligence, and creativity. Austerity manifests in schooling as “scientific and results-oriented, contemporary test-driven, scripted curricula and behavior modification programs subject students to an austere pedagogy—one that aggressively narrows possibilities for authentic learning and becoming” (De Lissovoy, 2015, p. 15).

But De Lissovoy does not stop at the outer level of “material effects and ideological positions.” He wants to get at the marrow-bone, to explore the “underlying structure and logic ... and the senses of subjectivity that it organizes and requires” (p. 2). Smith et al. (1950) appealed to the healthy, moral development of human personalities; De Lissovoy (2015) wants to interrogate the way neoliberalism has affected the human psyche as well, but by critically examining its insidious and destructive impact.

For De Lissovoy (2015), the indoctrination of austerity is so pervasive and visceral that it begins to operate on an ontological level. When people internalize messages to the point that they are wedded to their identity, they are victim to “increasingly vicious prescriptions [that] are not just the product of zealotry but rather the result of a fight for the soul of a system in crisis as well as a kind of ontological assertion of capital at the level of the spirit” (p. 17).

Testing is a ritual that does more than sort and rank. According to De Lissovoy (2015), it is a:

tethering of students to neoliberal’s truth for society, a truth that must be their truth; that we can and must be set free from all values not set against all others and we come to be only as we are priced—by others and by ourselves—in competition. (p. 19)

The structures of accountability, testing in particular, are the repetitive physical rituals of schooling that serve to initiate children into this sense of justified futility. De Lissovoy says that the stakes have risen, or they just describe the insidiousness of the problem more deeply; what's at stake is our soul. We will pass a point of no return where our epistemological existence will be indistinguishable from our ontological.

The Solution

What does emancipation look like? De Lissovoy (2015) asserts that empowerment must come from a crisis within subjectivity. We must “risk incoherence” in order to withdraw from the ideology. It will take another kind of initiation for people to break out of the daze of austerity. He brazenly suggests that the way to resist is not in opposition, but in “the fundamental instances of being” (p. 80). This is not a construction of self or reality, but a reclaiming, a “verification,” an uncovering of something that is already there. “Teaching, then, is a work on being and the invention of possibility of an authentic encounter between beings outside of domination” (p. 84). De Lissovoy's language here echoes spiritual notions of being in the present moment. At this juncture, the language of myth, spirituality, and psychology help to point the way.

Myth, and contemporary creative texts such as film, comics, speculative fiction, poetry, and more to characterize what's going on. If the human soul is at stake, we need a broader canvas than neo-Marxism to paint the picture. If we are being initiated into domination, we need the tools of initiation—story, symbol, metaphor, image, community—to help us find a new path.

The “work” of resistance needs to borrow, perhaps, from the old ways, the marginalized ways. We cannot do the work out of ego, in intellectual, epistemological understandings. We cannot think and describe our way through this. We need to remember and rediscover other ways

of knowing and being. We need to look at the artistic and spiritual dimensions of ourselves and imagine possible ways of being in this world. This is the language of the mystics, the poets, the musicians, the artists—the people outside the bell curve.

Conclusion

Though 65 years apart, these two books (Smith, et al., 1950; De Lissovoy, 2015) illustrate the story of resistance. It's an old story about movements and collective action against impossible odds—struggle. The chronicle of social reconstruction via schooling has encountered a dangerous crossroads with our present culture of self-annihilating austerity. Both texts recognize and profess, in their way, the essential liberation of the human spirit to do this work of resistance and re-invention. The critical, psychoanalytic language and lenses that De Lissovoy (2015) uses, furthering the initial impetus of Smith et al. (1950), needs to make the final leap of faith into the spiritual, mythopoetic, soulful zone. Mythology offers a bridge. This history and this story are captured in the heart of myth and the hero's adventure. We are looking for, questing for, freedom, meaning, and purpose. Mythology and initiation are curricula that can guide us to self-understanding, healing, and transformation.

The Right tells stories. They activate our imaginations by eliciting fear and danger, protectiveness, patriotism, etc. They use parts of myth. They have a monomyth anti-hero story already filled out. The hero's journey is the journey of a consumer in a meritocracy. It is peculiar how much fear accompanies symbols of the unconscious, such as the wild, dark forest or the tumultuous ocean depths. The heroes in our contemporary Western films often embody the American ideological notions of rugged individualism. They are seen riding into the inhospitable desert, alone, in a futile, bitter quest of redemption, revenge, or sacrifice. While keeping all the dire portents of the Western film, old stories tend to reassure us, at the outset, that an initiatory

journey into such black boxes holds promises not only of safety and protection, but for meaningful gains—an evolved self. Our contemporary heroes are like the horse in Orwell’s (1954) *Animal Farm*—they try harder and harder to do more and more in a Sisyphean upward trek until they die. I’ve heard teachers remark on how there never seems to be an end to the test score-increase mania.

Campbell (1949) says, “The hero finds all the forces of the unconscious at his side” (p. 72). Instead of being something to be feared, avoided, marginalized, it is the “inner” landscape that promises help and guidance. Palmer (1998) suggests that teachers learn to disavow such inner resources and that “the split of personhood from practice is encouraged by an academic culture that distrusts personal truth” (p. 18). Palmer continues, “of course our students are cynical about the inner outcomes of education; we teach them that the subjective self is unvalued and even unreal” (p. 19). For a student embarking on the dangerous journey of education, there are few initial reassurances that their own capacities will be excavated, employed, celebrated. All benefits are external. But De Lissovoy insists, as does Campbell, that the benefits are already inside of us.

Chapter XV: Epilogue

Pegasus Unfettered

Those who know not only that the Everlasting lives in them, but that what they, and all things, really are is the Everlasting, dwell in the groves of the wish-fulfilling trees, drink the brew of immortality, and listen everywhere to the unheard music of eternal concord. These are the immortals. The Taoist landscape paintings of China and Japan depict supremely the heavenliness of this terrestrial state. The four benevolent animals, the phoenix, the unicorn, the tortoise, and the dragon, dwell amongst the willow gardens, the bamboos, and the plums, and amid the mists of sacred mountains, close to the honored spheres. (Campbell, 1949, p. 167)

Journal Entry

Irony in relief—carved above the main entrance to my daughter’s school are two images of Pegasus. We used that architectural detail to lure her compliance in changing schools. The Pegasus, unicorn, horse, and pony have captured and held Maeve’s imagination for several years now. These symbols are pregnant with creative, spiritual, and libidinous powers. Nonetheless we tell her often, “You have to go to school, just because.” Already Maeve does not like school. Like Huck Finn, parts of her soul are resisting the fetters. We walk or drive her to school and hand her off to be shaped by this public crucible from 8:00 in the morning until 6:00 at night—10 hours. Worksheets of apples with smiling worms coming out them, parodies of holidays which are themselves parodies of ancient rites and rituals. We are surrounded by a small contingent of parents who seem to be committed, vehemently, with a veiled violence, to work the school system—to compete for *their* children to make sure their kids get what’s theirs. How well does her teacher embody possible ways of being? Better than we think, perhaps. I want Maeve’s

teachers and every teacher to be unfettered so they can “see” the teachable moments in terms of wonder, beauty, and love. I think most teachers do this anyway, or are held just in abeyance.

I have an “in” into the classroom. I’ve been the parent volunteer, tasked to implement the “Art in Action” arts program—as there is no art classroom or teacher. In the most powerful nation on earth, with the commonly regarded greatest culture, society, economy and government, art courses are disappearing all across the country. I am having trouble reaching the humor here.

I am interested in the shaping of Maeve’s “character” in the sense that I want her to be unfettered, to feel grounded, that she is carried. I can’t save her from the world, or from fear, but I want her to go into it with a sense of belonging to this world and universe. Are these things in her curriculum of 10 hours a day? Or, should I ask, is my daughter a good worker? What other possible purpose does such a value claim to serve than to indoctrinate people into labor?

So, is Maeve a good worker? Who cares? Is any human a good worker? I don’t want to rank, not even the first two humans. That is a sick question. Does she have the “skills” to “compete in the 21st century”? In thinking about how to answer this question ... I imagine the Pegasus on the wall outside the school taking on a three-dimensional aspect and breaking free of its moldings. They represent the synergy, the humanness, the unbridled human potential, the surge and surf of kindergarteners, with their innocent openness to the world. They will persist and ignore the 10-hour crucible. The poisoning of the human spirit takes a long, excruciating time. Perhaps that’s why public schooling lasts 12 years. The old stories, the psychological tools, the powerful metaphors, images, and symbols are frozen in relief, they have been turned to stone like the Pegasus on the wall.

Is she a good worker? Is she doing better than, competing with, her peers? Is she smarter, brighter, faster, better, more than the rest of the kids? It seems as if most of our epistemologies

are framed in valuing: late, early, boring, exciting, hard, easy, good, bad, and now the ubiquitous “like” that we see on Facebook and everywhere. We are reduced to evaluating our subjective lives at the level of an infant. There cannot be a sense of community when I am secretly hoping my daughter is outperforming the rest of the kindergarteners in her class. Will her and her classmates’ schooling really be a constant ranking, a constant wish for good grades? Is this really the measure, the criterion of all these Pegasus hearts? More than anything, I want young learners to “acquire,” or feel/know what I did not--to feel grounded in this earth, to have faith and love in themselves and each other. I want a core curriculum that addresses their core.

The ocean might be a better curriculum. There is a link between those images of Pegasus, and the indomitable, unfathomable Pacific. We think we know the ocean; we have maps of it; we name it; we know facts about it—but it is either a recreational thing to be used during the pleasure side of our routines or a resource to be acquired and exploited, instead of source of creativity, mystery, and wonder. Like our inner worlds, the ocean’s infinite depths are mostly unknown to us.

APPENDIX

While I weaved some commentary about my research methods into the text, background on it was avoided in order to maintain narrative flow. This Appendix is an elaboration offered for others who might wish to do similar inquiries. I was influenced by how Isabel Nuñez, Wade Tillett, Avi Lessing, Jason Lukasic, and Crystal Laura constructed their methodologies for their dissertations. Each drew upon the wide range of evolving techniques within narrative inquiry, and creatively tailored a methodological tool to fit the needs of their individualized work. I eclectically drew upon narrative inquiry, auto-ethnography, and phenomenology in order to portray, in written word, how the stages of Joseph Campbell's hero might apply to my own life as a student, educator, and human being.

I was engaged in exploring what mythology can tell us about lived curriculum, and how mythology as a lens can look at school and society, and self and community. Mythology is about stories that have been edited through thousands of years of tellings and retellings. Mythology encompasses the theological, philosophical, social, and psychological—it is a blurring genre, it is an intersection. Myths, like the hero's journey, have to do with the self. They also invite an existential critique, and, as Bettelheim (1989) notes, they are also very, very dangerous. Myths do not shy away from the terror-ridden side of human experience whether experienced internally by the individual or as external realities. Ultimately myths and stories are arguably about a search for meaning, and as such they command the attention of students.

In a research design course I attempted to uncover quantitative research into fairy tales. I tried multiple search combinations that included the words fairy, tale, folk, and myth on one side, and empirical, quantitative, and random sampling on the other. I found one (Crain, D'Alessio, McIntyre, & Smoke, 1983). The impetus for this experiment was similar to Bettelheim's initial

interest in fairy tales as well as my own . . . being struck by the palpably obvious phenomenon that most children react strongly—raptly—when listening to fairy tales. There hasn't been much on the "official" books past this curious correlation. I could not wrap my mind around a quantitative analysis of myths, but that's not to say such an approach is not worth exploring. Myths, however, represent some of the greatest human stories throughout history and qualitative approaches are more germane to the task.

Qualitative research comprises approaches designed to search for, uncover, describe and interpret the meanings of human lives and places. It requires and values the subjective role of the researcher as a part of the research process from start to finish. Many qualitative researchers have argued fervently, and rightly so, that you cannot be separate from your inquiry. There are multiple evolving selves within the process of inquiry. The idea of "situating" needs to be updated not as a static accounting but more of a moving, evolving, "GPS-style" radar tracking. At what point is this process and product exhaustive? I can describe my demographic background, my philosophical positions, my gender, and my social security number, but where does situating oneself really end? One of my interests was to explore how myths are relevant to one's sense of self. As such I didn't explore mythology as an ethnographic anthropologist; I was situated more intimately, and used primarily my own life/selves/stories as I explored the possibilities of mythology. This quest was especially suitable since one of the functions of myth is in fact to look inward.

Myths are essentially stories, and mythology is the study of those stories. They tell us how to live and how to make sense of ourselves, the world and others, yet the study of stories does not need to be confined to "great" literature, past or present. Our lives are surrounded by narrative structures everywhere: sitcoms, film, news media, plays, and everyday conversations.

The Internet is a supermall for texts. Facebook is a portal for portraits and personas, and each page tells a story about self. YouTube captures vignettes. PowerPoint involves a narrative structure as well. Sometimes I wonder how different the Clio award-winning advertisers are from poet laureates. Consumerism tells a story, and so does Fox News. School curricula can also be viewed as a narrative. I am also terribly interested in my own story about both the inner landscape and the outer world. Looking and thinking narratively, I wonder how my understanding of the world has been constructed by the threads of other narratives and to what extent I've been my own author.

The adage “it takes one to know one” comes to mind in considering that narratives are both phenomena and methods of inquiry. Michael Meade has often noted at his talks that myth tellers were the original psychologists, before psychology was invented. Narratives as methodologies may not be a “new” idea; people have been listening to stories since time immemorial for reasons other than entertainment or to acquire information.

Narrative inquiry explores the meaning of experience through narrative. Put more bluntly, it describes and interprets the phenomena of people's lives not with numerical data and statistical instruments within a supposedly de-contextualized vacuum, but through words, insights, emotions, and meanings that are socially and historically grounded, yet fluid as well (He & Phillion, 2008). Researchers and participants construct meanings together. The relevance of narrative inquiry extends beyond simply a focus on the personal experience—it is concerned with empowerment and transformation, particularly for those whose voices and experiences have been marginalized. Narrative inquiry has in common with an array of other critical research traditions a decidedly cross-cultural emphasis. Challenging traditional epistemological approaches to inquiry, narrative approaches allow theoretical and abstract phenomena to become

critical and embodied. Narrative inquiry allows misrepresented groups to reframe the pathological narratives of traditional research (He & Phillion, 2008).

With narrative inquiry there is no clear, *a priori* question, and there is perhaps no definitive conclusion. Perhaps the most salient uses of narrative inquiry for my phenomenon of interest reside in the idea of “blurred genres” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007) and the attention paid to cultural critique. I was very interested in blurring the notion of “texts.” I wanted to explore how ancient myths and contemporary narrative structures intersect with my own meanings as well as the artifices of “mother culture,” meaning the normative socialization that we all go through. I wanted to explore how the Maze and Minotaur of Daedalus and the Common Core bear similarities; however, the main narrative I explored was my own life narrative.

Scholarship that deals with self study often feels like it carries an apologetic tone, as if it is in constant need of legitimizing itself against other forms of inquiry. In “Translating Autoethnography across the AERA Standards: Toward Understanding Autoethnographic Scholarship as Empirical Research” (Hughes, Pennington, & Makris, 2012), the authors have begun to demonstrate how vital and central the role of the self is in research.

The idea that I cannot separate myself from what I am studying is a core tenet of the qualitative paradigm in general, and it is taken up more rigorously by postmodern theorists who, far from merely situating themselves, seek to make the multiple selves of the researcher part of the data and analysis. We construct meanings with the persons and phenomena we are investigating. Autoethnography is, in a way, the study of one’s positionality. It inquires into the content of one’s own life story using ethnographic processes (Chang, 2008). Autoethnography is concerned with the self in relation to others in society. It is an inquiry into how one is shaped by

one's culture. It is an "active, scientific, and systematic view of personal experience" (Hughes, Pennington, & Makris, 2012) that seeks to understand cultural experience.

Autoethnography provided a method for mining my own experiences as an elementary student, a teacher, a doctoral student, and a college instructor to reflect on "existing structures, theory, and scholarship" (p. 212). This approach allowed me to explore questions around the "nurture" side of developmental debate: How was I initiated into society through schooling and other forces? The key attribute distinguishing autoethnography from autobiography is the contextual analysis. I pondered the epistemological initiations that have shaped my understanding of self and others. This approach allowed for a critique of the contemporary "myths" or frames of meaning articulated in our culture and how they have impacted personal meanings.

Since my principal narrative is my life story, my lived experiences, an effective way to understand this was through phenomenology. A study that explores what it means to be human, whether through textual analysis, self-study, or a combination of both, benefits from the overarching humanistic stance of phenomenology. This approach appears to dovetail with both narrative inquiry and autoethnography in its focus on lived experience and meaning.

Phenomenological research is a search for awe and mystery in everyday life. It is concerned with a search for meaning that is potentially transformative. "Human science operates on the principle of the recognition of the existence of *freedom* in human life" (van Manen, 1990, p. 21).

Knowledge gained from this kind of research is not intended to be added to some larger conglomerate of data—it is intended to result in "action sensitive knowledge" enabling researcher and person(s) to go deeper than the surface, familiar face of things and to change their practice.

Like the previous methodologies the hermeneutic phenomenological approach is one grounded in experience, without theoretical agendas except for the compass of getting at the essence of something. The researcher is asked to become enormously sensitive to what's happening in a situation without abstract conceptual frameworks—without thinking. Meanings were discovered as I considered Campbell's stations and reflected on my own experiences—they were not anticipated.

The end “products” of the human sciences are not generalizations or certainties, but rather an intimate, resonant, depthful insight into the human experience . . . like Heidegger's “woodpaths” that lead to “clearings” (van Manen, 1990, p. 29). Phenomenology is about describing, and hermeneutics is about interpreting. Artistic texts such as literature are considered condensed human articulations of experience and as such are apt data sources for phenomenology (p. 70). This is perhaps the strongest justification for my use of phenomenology, since one of my interests was to blur the genres of myth, literature, film, and experience.

To use a human science methodology is to write yourself into the phenomenon. The researcher is asked to become the tool. This makes sense if I am “living the question(s)” (Tillett, 2011). What is mythology? What is initiation? What about mythology pulls, lures, captures, captivates? Into what have I been initiated in this world? These were the questions that spurred deeper reflection, and it is hoped that going deeper is a worthwhile contribution to the field and knowledge of curriculum studies.

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VITA

DONALD JOSEPH OHLINGER

Education

- 2010-2015 Doctorate in Curriculum Studies at the University of Illinois at Chicago
2001-2003 M.Ed. from the University of Illinois at Chicago in Elementary Education
1995-1997 B.A. from Grinnell College in History
1988-1990 A.A. from College of DuPage

University Teaching Experience

- 2015 Adjunct Faculty, University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA
TEC602 Multiple Subject Curriculum and Instruction: Visual and Performing Arts
TEC618 Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice
2013-present Adjunct Faculty (online), National University, San Diego, CA
TED602 Foundations of Education
2011-present Adjunct Faculty, Concordia University Chicago
FPR 6000 Ethics and Foundations of American Education
FPR 6400 Contemporary Issues in Curriculum and Practice
2012 Teaching Assistant, University of Illinois at Chicago
ED 205 Introduction to Race, Ethnicity, and Education
2010-2011 Adjunct Faculty, University of Illinois at Chicago
ED 431 Improving Learning Environments

K-12 Teaching Experience

- 2005-2010 Reinberg Elementary, Chicago Public Schools
3rd & 4th grade self-contained
2003-2005 Irma C. Ruiz Elementary, Chicago Public Schools
6th grade language arts, writing for grades 3-5, 8th grade social studies
2000-2002 Horace Mann Elementary, Oak Park, IL, K-6 cadre substitute teacher

Landscape Design Experience

- 1995-present Owner/Operator, Raven Landscape Design
1999-2000 Landscape Designer, Garden Concepts, Glenview, IL
1997-1999 Landscape Designer, Krueger Landscaping, Rolling Meadows, IL

Teaching Certificates:

- (03) Initial Elementary Teaching #2132493
Self Contained General Education K-9
Middle School Endorsements – *Art, Social Science, Language Arts*

Publications

Schubert, W. H., Nuñez, I., Ohlinger, J., Sanny, R., & Schultz, B. (2004). What's worthwhile and what impedes it in curriculum and teaching? Perspectives on testing and standards. In What

Professors of Curriculum Have to Say About National Standards and Testing From Georgia to California. A monograph prepared for the Annual Meeting of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, New Orleans, LA.

Invited Presentations

Roberts, P., Nuñez, I., Ohlinger, J., He, M. F., Scott-Simmons, W., Haynes, A., & Tennial, D. M. (2009). An ongoing conversation with and about Bill Schubert and Bill Ayers. Washington, DC: Invited address at the American Association for Teaching and Curriculum Annual Conference.

Presentations

Ohlinger, J. (2015). Reimagining Resistance. San Antonio, TX: Paper presented at the American Educational Studies Association Annual Meeting.

Ohlinger, J., & Nuñez, I. (2015). This Is What It Feels Like: The Lived Experience of Public School Parents under Neoliberalism. Dayton, OH: Presentation at the Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice.

Ohlinger, J. (2014). Tales from the Right: Propaganda as the New Mythology. Savannah, GA: Paper presented at the Curriculum Studies Summer Collaborative.

Ohlinger, J. (2013). Uncommon Core: Reimagining Meaningful Curriculum through Myth and Movies. Dayton, OH: Paper presented at the Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice.

Nuñez, I., Schubert, W. H., & Ohlinger, J. (2013). The Teacher and the Curriculum: Who Knows Best What's Worth Knowing? Chicago, IL: Panel discussion at the American Association for Teaching and Curriculum Conference.

Ayers, W., & Ohlinger, J. (2012). Provoking Dialogues: To Teach, the Journey in Comics. Dayton, OH: Presentation at the Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice.

Ohlinger, J. (2012). Dark (K)night Rising: Initiations as Conditions for Powerful Learning. Dayton, OH: Paper presented at the Bergamo Conference on Curriculum Theory and Classroom Practice.

Ohlinger, J. (2011). Encountering Wildness. Chicago, IL: Poster presentation at the National Association for Multicultural Education Annual Meeting.

Honors and Awards

Ann Lynn Lopez Schubert Memorial Fellowship in Curriculum Studies
Oppenheimer Grant Award for arts integration in social studies curriculum

Service

Mentoring and supervision of student landscape design and installation projects at Mann, Ruiz, and Reinberg schools

Arts integration in all subject areas: visual arts, graphic design, rendering, and performing arts

Mentorship of high school youth groups in community service projects

Hospice Volunteer

Professional Associations

National Association for Multicultural Education

American Association for Teaching and Curriculum

American Federation of Teachers

American Educational Studies Association